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**Cinema, Space and Nation: The Production of Doğu in Cinema in
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**Cinema, Space and Nation: The Production of Doğu in Cinema in
Turkey**

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Dedication

To my family who gave me strength and love to survive the Ph.D..

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Cinema, Space and Nation: The Production of Doğu in Cinema in Turkey

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From social realism and socialist cinema, to the Turkish ‘new wave’ and the nascent Kurdish cinema, this dissertation traces the mutual implication of the production of Turkish national space and of Doğu (“The East”) as cinematic space. Doğu emerged as part of a discursive formation within the Turkish state’s address to eastern Turkey; it entered national cinema as a result of the journey of social realism to the region in the aftermath of the military coup in 1960, which allowed for the burgeoning of the socialist public sphere and enabled filmmakers to cinematically reflect on the region. However, the state’s renewed security-oriented interests, triggered by the resurgent Kurdish movement within both Turkey and Iraq, permeated the region and enforced limits on the representation of Doğu as a new cinematic space. Although in its cinematic incarnation ‘Doğu’ was hardly a perpetuation of state ideology, a cartographic anxiety—informed by the desire for spatial modernization—shaped the politico-aesthetic parameters of the region’s cinematic presence. In recent years, the representation of the region within the nascent Kurdish cinema can be understood as a deconstructive turn problematizing the foundation of Turkish national space and the cinematic Doğu.

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CHAPTER I – CINEMA SPACE NATION

Born in and with a space, the state may also perish with it.

Henry Lefebvre, “Space and the State”

INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation project, I study the representation of Doğu in cinema in Turkey. Doğu, ‘the East’ in Turkish, refers to the Kurdish-inhabited Eastern part of Turkey. This region initially became a cinematic subject within the context of a national problematic in the 1960s, although cinema’s journey to the region goes back to the start of the 1950s, when the region served as a background for films such as *Mazarımı Taştan Oyun/ Dig My Grave on Stone* (Atıf Yılmaz 1951), *Dağları Bekleyen Kız / The Girl Who Waits the Mountains* (Atıf Yılmaz, 1955), and *Ezo Gelin / The Bride Ezo* (Orhan Elmas, 1955). While these films took place *within* the East, it was only in the 1960s, when the Socialist Left had appropriated the term as part of a developmentalist rhetoric, that the region itself became the subject of cinema. In both the state and the socialist account, however, the East was deemed a part of the national territory not fully integrated into national modernization. Doğu, in this way, emerged as a ‘problem’ obstructing spatial modernization, namely the production of national space. I study Doğu as a cinematic space by relating the production of national cinema to the production of national space in Turkey. As a cinematic space, Doğu emerged at the intersection of the processes of the

production of national cinema and of national space. Doğu is both the geographical location of the region (the East), and the name of the region as addressed within the framework of national modernization. In this project, I use Doğu to refer to this national problematic through which the region gained its visibility as a new cinematic space, while the East will be used as a geographical signifier.

The journey of Turkish cinema to *Doğu* in the 1960s meant both the physical production process in the region and the problematization of the region through national modernization. In order to explain the terms of the encounter of national cinema with the region as Doğu, I specified certain starting points. The journey of national cinema to the region was made possible within the context of the 1960s. Throughout the decade, after a long period of the state's monopoly over discursive production on the region since the 1920s, cinema managed to gather interested progressive writers and artists around its production process. Social realism as a cinematic movement, which emerged as a more politicized cinematic language informed and defined the filmmakers' engagement in the region. Although social realism took shape within the post-military coup reformation period in the early 1960s, its aesthetico-political parameters were formed in the early 1950s, after what I will define as the 'realist turn' in cinema, which overlapped with the emergence of 'national cinema.'

Although informed by the literature on the concept of 'national cinema,' my analysis of national cinema in the Turkish context varies from these accounts. Since the 1980s, within several debates, national cinemas have been defined and problematized in

relation to the conditions of postcoloniality and Third cinemas (Willemen 1989); and, more recently within the context of global, transnational, and world cinema frameworks (Hjort and Petrie 2007, Vitali and Willemen 2006, Ďurovičová and Newman 2009) My account diverges from these in several important ways. First, I define ‘nation’ through spatial terms rather than cultural terms, although ‘cultural’ is an important part of spatiality. I take national cinemas as productive of national space rather than enclosed within it. Second, I argue that the emergence of national cinema in Turkey was based not on ‘national specificity’ vis-à-vis other nations and national cinemas, which, as Paul Willemen attests, informed the early studies on ‘national cinema,’ (2006) but as a result of internal debates on the definition of ‘the nation’ in terms of its space and time.

The international context and the industrial imperatives such as the effect of the municipal tax cut on film ticket revenues in 1948 and the concomitant rise in domestic film production unquestionably affected the emergence of a national cinema in the 1950s (Arslan 2011). Yet these factors were overdetermined by the need for defining a nation that would identify the ‘national cinema.’ Although ‘national cinema’ was celebrated as a sign of the end of both Western and Eastern influences on film production, the desire for ‘the national’ was part of a larger discursive formation within which both the function of cinema and nation was redefined in the 1950s. Third, rather than tracing what makes a cinema national (what makes Turkish cinema Turkish), whether in terms of its content, style, specificity, or industrial scope, I trace the emergence of the *discourse* of national cinema: why did ‘national cinema’ become a concern only in the 1950s ? This will help

discussing where and when to start the national cinema in Turkey. Following these concerns, I propose the beginning of national cinema, while also taking into consideration the ‘first films’ and the arrival of the cinematic medium, and the emergence and consolidation of the film industry, should be traced back to the moment ‘national cinema’ emerged as a problematic. In this way, I suggest there is a discrepancy between the history of cinema and of film production in a national space and the historiography of ‘national cinema’ informed by this problematic, the former being mainly the product of the latter. This national problematic defined what kind of history would be written at that particular moment.

Informed by this spatial problematic, I discuss Turkish ‘national cinema’ through two related events that took place in the late 1940s and early 1950s: the spatial expansion of film production and the ‘realist turn,’ which informed this spatial expansion. In the early 1950s, on the one hand, filmmakers went to rural Anatolia to make films, on the other hand, they went out to the urban everyday as part of the narrative space, after decades of being constricted to a completely ‘staged’ *mise-en-scène*. These excursions, both to rural Anatolia and to the urban everyday after long staying in the vicinity of Istanbul’s studios, was part of a search for a realist aesthetic that would define national cinema.

However, the journey to rural Anatolia for the sake of ‘realism’ was not limited to cinema, but was part of a process through which ‘nation’ was defined through the term of ‘realism,’ and rural Anatolia as the ‘space’ of ‘real nation.’ Cinematic realism

(documentary style, non-professional/amateur actors, *recording* life as is) was chosen as able to capture real nation within Anatolia. This spatial shift, the realist turn and its relationship to the nation, all through the problematic of national cinema, were definitive for the filmmakers' journey to the to the East and it determined both the aesthetic-political parameters of the films on Doğu and their reception by the critics. For this reason, the study of national cinema in terms of spatial shifts, namely the spatial analysis of national cinema is crucial to a discussion of Doğu as cinematic space. The spatial analysis will also bring together national space and national cinema as problematic informing cinematic representation.

The introduction of Doğu in Turkish cinema was informed on the one hand by events in cinema, such as the foundation of Sinematek (Turkish Cinematheque) by the left-wing cineastes and the emergence of social realism and a more politicized culture of film production, etc., and on the other, by the events taking place within the East in the 1960s, such as the socio-political mobilities (Gündoğan 2011) organized by the socialist left. However, it was the military coup of 1960 that defined both the possibility and the limits of the representation of Doğu as cinematic space. The coup defined the possibility because social realism through which Doğu gained its visibility was part of the reformation process that led to the emergence of a socialist public sphere, which, for the first time brought together Turkish and Kurdish socialists. Also during the 1960s, the East became an object of critical scholarly analysis. The coup defined the limits of representation because during the same period, the post-coup state intensified its security-

oriented policies within the region due to the Kurdish movement both inside Turkey and in the neighboring Iraq. Although the emergence of a socialist public sphere affected film production in the 1960s, the ‘national cinema problematic’ – the production of national cinema and finding a national cinematic language and aesthetic—shaped social realism’s engagement in the East until the 1970s.

In my study of cinematic representation’s ‘productive’ contribution to the spatial formation of Doğu vis-à-vis the national space, it is necessary to explain what I mean by nation and Doğu as spatial formations. I define the process of nation building through the production of national space by states’ spatial techniques. Although nation-states are founded on a demarcated territory on which they hold sovereign rights, the physical land becomes national space through states’ spatial techniques. Within the process of national spatial formation, parts of the national territory are redefined in relation to a new national center, and this relationality informs the identity of different/heterogeneous parts. In order to explain the mutually implicated relationship between nation and space, I define the concept ‘nation-space’ as a problematization of ‘national space.’ While national space defines a particular space’s identity as national without actually defining the nation or space it identifies, nation-space, decouples national space by problematizing the twin processes of spatializing nation and nationalizing space as state spatial practices in national modernization process. An important part of the spatial modernization is that these spatial techniques also work to ‘realize’ the nation in a phenomenological sense. Techniques such as cartography, geography, and census render the nation visible and

experiential. While becoming ‘real,’ the nation also emerge as a series of ‘images.’ I name this form of visibility resulting from state spatial practices, ‘state realism.’ The analysis of Doğu at the intersection of cinematic realism and state realism will show the limits and form of the (in)visibility as it relates to the region. In both terms, ‘realism’ is not a reflective but productive of its subject (through the problematic of national modernization.) Although cinematic realism is the second chapter’s analytical concern, ‘realist’ ideology informs the production of all films I discuss throughout the dissertation.

Both cinematic realism through the analysis of realist turn and national cinema and state realism through the analysis of national space are informed by a spatial analysis, which also informs my textual readings of the films. I study Doğu as cinematic space in three main iconographic sites by which it became visible: borderland, farmland, and empty-flooded village. Each site corresponds to a genre and a particular spatial problematic. Borderland was the main site in 1960s social realist films on Doğu. Borderland became the primary cinematic space through an attempt to find a secular/modern culture on the fringes of the national space as well as through the cartographic anxiety triggered by the Kurdish movement at both sides of the south-eastern borders. In these films, the national border and its politico-cognitive acceptance by the characters constitute the criteria for being modern. Although the border appeared in different periods and within different genres, especially in the 1980s due to the beginning of the armed conflict on the borders, it was not the main site in the later films.

Farmland was the main cinematic site of the films on Doğu in the 1970s socialist cinema. The farmland was the main space of economic production in the eastern context, where the economy was based on agricultural labor. The farmland was both the space of production and of revolution. The site disappeared as the main cinematic space with the loss of faith in socialist revolution within the context of the East after the 1980 military coup, which targeted the socialist movement. Empty-flooded villages were the main cinematic sites in the new Turkish cinema of the 1990s. The site manifests how Turkish cinema dealt with the effects on the region of the war between Turkish army and the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) since the mid 1980s: approximately three thousand villages were evacuated as a security precaution and as a result of dam construction as part of the massive South-East Anatolia Development project. As part of these sites, mountains have been an important iconographic element in the films of Doğu, signifying either resistance (against suppression) or unconquerability and unreachability (by the security forces); their narrative function can be situated within the three sites I specified.

I offer this spatial reading of the films on Doğu against two trends in film analysis that have defined film studies on Turkish cinema. One is the character-based analysis, which focuses on the identity of the main characters through the analytics of reality, and deploys the analysis of stereotypes. A recent study by Kurdish cultural critic and journalist Müslüm Yücel, *Türk Sineması'nda Kürtler* (Kurds in Turkish Cinema) covers the entire history of Turkish cinema featuring Kurds. Yücel argues that in popular Turkish cinema, Kurds categorically performed socially inferior roles and have been

represented almost without exception as Turks with a broken accent. The representation, Yücel suggests, has been based on the assimilation and humiliation of Kurdish identity. Although a valid analysis of the state's practices against the Kurdish identity, the argument dismisses the entire field of cinematic production as the continuation of state ideology¹. Methodologically, this approach takes a particular identity as an *a priori* that can be either truthfully or stereotypically represented. In contrast, I suggest that the filmmakers' engagement in the region and its characters is always pre-determined by a national-spatial problematic through which they gain cinematic visibility. Thus, the change in the identity of the characters in different periods can be explained by the change in the formulation of the national-spatial problematic. I argue that it is the space that embodies the characters, and not vice versa, and we should take space, Doğu, as the main subject of analysis: The main characters in the 1960s social realist films, the bandit and the smuggler, inhabited the borderland; the revolutionary figure of 1970s socialist films, the maraba (peasant), inhabited the farmland; and the major character in the new

¹ As I will discuss later on, cinema's engagement in the region was a break in the ideology of cultural productions on Doğu. Until the 1940s the literary works on Doğu was heavily informed by the Kemalist ideology, which was based on the superiority of the Republican cultural project. The two early foundational novels *Dağları Bekleyen Kız/The Girl Who Waits the Mountains* (1936) by Esat Mahmut Karakurt and *Zeynonun Oğlu/Zeyno's Son* (1928) by Halide Edip Adivar are examples of the early incarnations of Doğu as a literary space. The novels take place during the Kurdish rebellions after the foundation of Turkish Republic in 1923. Both novels are about the amorous relationship between a Turkish military officer as the embodiment of national modern and the representative of the new state and a young Kurdish woman expected to be encultured by the relationship (Alakom 2010.) The novels reflect the Kemalist ideology of the early Republican period by narrating the story of modernization through military presence. Although in the 1960s films on Doğu has military officers as main characters, these films avoid a celebratory brace of the Army beyond the necessity for passing film censorship. The filmmakers I will discuss throughout the dissertation was critical of this early high modernist Republican ideology.

Turkish cinema of the 1990s, the migrant, was unable to inhabit the empty, flooded village due to the spatial practices of the state.

The second trend in Turkish film studies is related to the recent works on new Turkish cinema. The ‘new’ Turkish cinema as a new analytical term to define 1990s art and popular films has been used by the film scholars such as Asuman Suner (2011), Gönül Dönmez-Colin (2008), and Savaş Arslan (2011) to define a post-national cinematic aesthetic, which problematizes the idea of nation as homogenous and coherent identity-space. The analytical framework is to a great extent informed by transnational, excilic, diasporic cinema theory put forth, among others, by Hamid Naficy in his work *Accented Cinema* (2001) where he formulizes a new mode of cinematic presence through the aesthetic-political experiences/experiments of the several “deterritorialized” filmmakers whose productions evade the boundaries of nation and national cinema. According to Naficy, interstitiality, mobility, deterritorialization, and border-crossing are modalities that give rise to a particular language of cinema. Informed by this framework, the analysis of the recent films on Doğu takes the same parameters as their modus operandi. Suner’s discussion of *Eşkiya/The Bandit* (Yavuz Turgul 1996); Dönmez-Colin’s (2008) and Kevin Robins and Asu Aksoy’s discussion of *Güneşe Yolculuk/Journey to the Sun* (Yeşim Ustaoğlu 1999) (Robins and Aksoy 2000) are representative examples. While in both films the main characters are ‘deterritorialized,’ and constantly in move --Baran in *Eşkiya* had to leave his village and go to Istanbul to find his beloved; Mehmet in *Güneşe Yolculuk*, after losing his job in Istanbul where he

lived as a migrant worker, took his friend's coffin to his village for burial and there assuming the latter's identity --as I will discuss in the fourth chapter in detail, I argue that a more productive analysis would focus, not on the deterritorialized characters, but on the films' problematization of the state spatial practices that produce such migrant subjects.

In what follows, I offer a brief historical background of the region followed by a discussion of my conceptual framework, research methodology and theoretical-methodological influences behind my project. Afterwards, I provide an outline of my chapters overviewing each one's theoretical stake within the overall concern of the dissertation.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: NATION-STATE, THE EAST AND DOĞU

Until the late 19th century Turkish modernization process, the Eastern region had been ruled by Kurdish principals with varying degrees of administrative autonomy on the territory. Although after the World War I parts of the Kurdish nobility were enrolled in the war effort during the 'war of independence' as irregular forces on the Turkish side, The foundation of the Turkish Republic in the early 1920s brought the collaboration to an end. The rebellions, which broke out in the late nineteenth century, resumed after the foundation of the Turkish Republic. The Sheikh Said Rebellion of 1925, the Ağrı Rebellion of 1930-31, and the Dersim Rebellion of 1937-38² (Yeğen 1999, 2011) were

² In recent scholarship on national historiography and Kurdish Question, the term 'Dersim Massacre' is used to define the event instead of 'Dersim Rebellion.' While the existence of the local resistance against the Turkish army has been accepted, the response of the Turkish army was well beyond only suppressing the resistance including mass killings and deportations from the province and changing the name of the

the major instances of armed encounters between the new state and the Kurdish opposition. This opposition was circumvented within the one and a half decades after the foundation and the region was kept under the State of Emergency until the 1950s. During this period, the territoriality of the state was established through military build-up as part of the martial law precautions that expanded until 1950. The inhabitants of the region were deported to the western parts of Turkey with the Forced Settlement Law of 1934 and replaced with non-Kurdish population, while the place names and cultural titles were Turkicised throughout the region. During this period the term *Doğu* and *Doğulu* (the one from *Doğu*) began to be used in place of “Kurd.” Except for a few novels praising the military might and presence in the region and official reports written by the emergency governors on the general situation within the region, the East had been kept strictly outside both cultural and academic representation until the second half of the 1960s³. This absence had been informed by the nationalist discourse—formed in the 1930s—that Kurds do not ‘exist.’ The comparison of the geography books of 1920s and 1930s is a

province to the name of the military operation ‘Tunceli’ (bronze-hand). In November 2011, the Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan apologized ‘in the name of the state’ accepting the event as massacre perpetrated by the then ruling party Republican Peoples Party that currently serves as the main opposition in the Parliament. (<http://bianet.org/bianet/bianet/134241-basbakan-dersim-icin-ozur-diliyorum>) (accessed on 9/10/12)

³ *Doğu Sorunu* (Eastern Question), signifying the situation of the Eastern regions in terms of the necessity of incorporating the region into the new nation-space, reincarnated within official reports after the foundation of the Turkish state with regard to the rebellions, their causes, and measures that should be taken by the state. In 1936, a year before the Dersim Massacre a “Top Secret” report was submitted to the President by the Minister of Economy Celal Bayar. Entitled ‘*Şark Raporu*’ (Eastern Report), it discusses the necessity of socio-economic reforms to assimilate the Eastern region into Turkish culture³. In the report, Bayar claims that in addition to the social reforms, in order to make sure of the intended results, the reforms should be accompanied by deporting Kurdish notables from the region to avoid likely reverse effects(Bayar 2006)³.

good indication of the state practices and the disappearance of Kurds and the emergence of Doğu(lu) as a new discursive category. The expressions like “Kurdish women dresses with shalvar and colorful headcover” in 1920’s geography books changed to “Eastern (Doğulu) women” into the 1930s. By the end of the decade, the expression Kurd(ish) disappeared from the official discourse and was replaced by Doğu(lu) (Ozkan, 2002). The 1934 Law on Family Names prohibited the use of last names that refer to other nations. The law required all last names to be in proper Turkish (Durgun, 2011). In 1941, the first Geography Congress met to discuss policies to make the national geography conform to “Turkish reality” (p. 213). As a result, the national territory was divided into seven geographical regions and named according to the adjacent bodies of water (Akdeniz/Mediterranean Region, Karadeniz/Black Sea Region, Marmara Sea Region, Ege/Aegean Region) or to the geographical location of the region (Inner-Anatolia Region, East Anatolia Region, South-East Anatolia Region). The congress also discussed Turkicising the name of the districts, cities and villages in the regions according to similar generic formulas. These techniques, while rendering the nation visible by registering it onto identification cards, maps, atlases, and road signs, erase the existence—both physical (material) and symbolic—of the non-Turks within the nation-space. Doğu was invented as the limit of representation of the region and its inhabitants. In addition to the discursive reincarnation into the category of the geographic location, within the official documents Doğu was used pejoratively: It signified pre-modern allegiances against the modern nation-state, with illiterate, obstinate and primitive people.

DOĞU AS DISCURSIVE SPACE

Discursive space is informed by Edward Said's discussion of the Orient in *Orientalism* (Said 1979). More than a physical location, the term discursive space is informed by the ideological and political function of that particular geography within the organization of power on a particular scale. However, unlike Said's *Orientalism* in which he studies the Orient as part of colonial knowledge production based on the dichotomous ordering of the physical space through the axis of self and the other (occident-orient) (ibid.), I discuss Doğu as part of the national knowledge production whose spatial ordering is based on the *erasure* of the self-other dichotomy within an intended space-time of the nation. Hence I discuss the discursive space (of Doğu) in conjunction with the spatial (material) practices that contribute to the production of the former within the economy of state power.

Using Doğu both in physical (as East) and discursive terms presents a number of difficulties. While it became the region that was produced geographically in the 1940s as part of the national territory as a result of the decade's geographic and cartographic surveys dividing the national territory into administrative-economic units, Doğu also refers to a particular problematization of the region within the state discourse concerning the production of nation-space that I define as 'spatial modernization.' As I discuss in the second chapter, the semantic inflation in the term from a geographic signifier, as a 'location,' to a discursive 'space' produces— and reproduces—this locality within the nexus of national significations. To avoid the confusion, I use 'the East' and occasionally

‘the region’ to refer to a geographical unit, while ‘Doğu’ is used to refer to the discursive aspect. In this way, I define my subject as being not merely the films taking place in this particular region, namely, in the East, but in Doğu as discursive space. I use this distinction as a heuristic device, and the reader should be informed that I am not taking ‘the East’ as a value-free and neutral definition, as it always implies a (national) center and in this way I suggest the images cannot be just the reflection of a physical location: both geographical representation (cartographic projection) and cinematic representation are already mediated by discursive regimes. They intersect as much as diverge. My main interest here is in the way cinema engages in the problematization of the region as Doğu.

I differentiate between the films on Doğu and the ones that are taking place within the East. I have specified around a hundred films taking place in the Turkish East since 1950s (see the complete list in Appendix A). Within this list, I selected a list of around twenty films made between 1965 till 2005 for analysis which engaged in the production of Doğu as cinematic space. These films *thematically* inspired many other popular films on the region without a similar political/ideological commitment on the part of the filmmakers. One example in terms of the criteria for film selection is *Mezarımı Taştan Oyun/Dig My Grave on Stone* (1951.) The film takes place in the city of Diyarbakir, the producer’s hometown, and was one of the earliest films taking place in the region; however, it is based on a romantic folktale and made under the influence of the highly popular Egyptian melodramas of the period. The actor and producer of the film, Hüseyin Peyda, known as the Rudolph Valentino of Turkish cinema, wanted the film, to be shot in

his hometown, among other things, to cut the cost of production (Yılmaz 1995, Yücel 2009).⁴ Similarly, there are films making use of the high popularity of the films on Doğu. The ‘Arabesque’ films on the ‘Eastern’ singers exploit the same tropes made popular by the films I discuss in here. What motivated the directors of these films, however, was the commercial viability of the genre rather than their cultural-political engagement in the region. Although not included in the analysis, I briefly mention these films in the third chapter under the rubric of ‘fatalistic’ films of the East.

When I first started my project my working assumption was as follows: although the directors went to the region as part of the critique of the state practices therein, their cinematic production in Doğu worked to reproduce the state ideology (formed till the 1960s). However, as I delved into the production stories of the films, the biographies of the filmmakers, and how they negotiated being able to have access to a ‘state of emergency’ region in a mode that was critical of state practices, I shifted my framework from the idea of cinema as direct ideological re-production of state’s conception of Doğu to the field of cinematic production as semi-autonomous yet overdetermined by state practices. As I discuss in the following chapters, both cinematic space and national space have been subjected to several contestations and they are far from being homogenous formations. Cinema and political power in Turkey had a mostly antagonistic relationship

⁴ However, the story on which the film is based is about Abdo Agha who is known to be Kurdish (Yücel 2009). Yet, during the filming process any reference to the ethnic identity of the character is erased. Although I recognize the importance of the film within a discussion on cinema and national identity, and a textual analysis of which would show the erasures the film embodies to achieve popular status, I am not including it in my discussion as neither the film nor the producer (and director) comments on the region beyond appropriating as the background.

except for a few moments in the history of Turkish cinema: the period after the 1960 military coup when the political power turned a green light on the emergence of a socialist public sphere and allowed cinema's modernist critique of the dethroned Democrat Party's conservative ideology is a primary example. While appropriating the term as the only (possible) form of engagement available, these films redefined Doğu as a contested space of class antagonism in accordance with the critical discourse of the decade, which informed the ideology of cultural production on the region. Even still, film production has been perpetually overdetermined by state practices—censorship being the prime instance: almost all films in the following pages were initially banned and/or censored by the censorship committee, which was comprised of state officials without any representative from the film industry. Moreover, the majority of the directors and screenwriters were blacklisted by the committee, yet they continued producing their craft under pseudonyms.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As a popular medium, Turkish cinema since 1950s made the East, a state of emergency region, visible and available for mass consumption. Although censorship to an important extent limited the scope of visual and narrative engagement of the filmmakers, the uniqueness of the cinematic medium resides in its capacity as a cartographic field where these limits can be traced and seen. Considering the ideology of cinematic production, it is also a field where the political power encounters its opposition. Since the 1960s, when knowledge production on the region was still under

the strict control of the state, filmmakers insisted on engaging in the East as one of its main subjects.

Methodologically, I analyze these films as part of the production and contestation of national space. Cinema is palimpsestic field, which requires a method of analysis that runs at several grounds. I introduce a spatial reading as the overall methodology that brings together different analytical concerns. Spatial reading refers to the analysis of space within the films, the space of cinematic production, and cinema's connection to the production of national space. It comprises textual and contextual analyses: the textual analysis of the films reads space *in* films by asking how films form their narrative space. How do characters engage in the space they inhabit or move across? How does the iconography of Doğu change over time? Contextual analysis aims to take films as contexts themselves. Although contextual analysis, in a conventional sense, is the study of the context within which cultural production takes place, thereby assuming a one-way structural causation between the context and the text, in my own use of contextual analysis, films map their own contexts. This has two meanings: on a textual level, the contexts become visible—readable—through films, and the textual analysis may reveal contextual 'determinants.' In the second sense, to which this projects leans, films create their own contexts, namely, there is no concrete context prior to the production of a film. Both films and their analysis bring together otherwise separate events to make sense of the films, or these otherwise disparate events assume a relation within the analyses of the films. This 'bringing together' gives an analytical definition of a 'context.' In this sense,

‘the’ context is the co-product of the films and their readings. Both textual and contextual analyses are important methodological components of spatial reading whose primary concern is to show how these films, together with state spatial techniques, become productive of the space of Doğu.

LITERATURE REVIEW: SPATIAL TURN, CRITICAL GEOGRAPHY AND THE NATION

Since the early 1990s, cinema studies has revealed interests in the disciplines of geography and political science, disciplines that traditionally had a scientific commitment to the world but were undergoing an epistemic shift that is now referred to as the “spatial turn” and offered fresh insights for scholars formerly working through traditionally realist sciences. Encapsulated by the works of Henry Lefebvre ([1974] 1991), Michel de Certeau (1984), Michel Foucault (1967, 1980, 1984), David Harvey (1989), Edward Soja (1980, 1989), and Doreen Massey (1994), the spatial turn opened the door for a critical interdisciplinary dialogue between geography and other fields, including cinema studies.

My own spatial readings are informed by Henry Lefebvre whose *The Production of Space* ([1974] 1991) redefined space as both a social product and productive of the social against the idea of space as abstract, empty and homogenous. Edward Soja continues the perspective in his formulation of ‘socio-spatial dialectics’ (1980) and later in *Postmodern Geographies* (1989) through socio-spatio-temporal ‘trialectics.’ Soja criticizes the prime status given to historicism in social analysis, which proposes historical progress as taking (no)place by reducing space to a neutral component. The reflection of this historicism and taking (no)place in cinema – and film—studies can be

seen as the dominance, until recently, of anthropocentric readings of cinematic representations where the mobile body, both the filmmakers and the characters (e.g. Naficy, 2001) take the central stage. These analyses that take the body at the center reproduce the body and space as dichotomous. Taken as the art of motion (it comes as no surprise that one of the foundational stories in the history of cinema is the photographer Eadweard Muybridge's desire to capture motion), cinema has been, until recently, analyzed through historicist methodology that prioritizes progress and agency. Although spatial reading problematizes historicism and the primacy of agent/body over the space it inhabits, as informed by Lefebvre (1991, 2009), Foucault (1980, 1982, 1986) and Soja (1980, 1989), it does not reduce the body to the effect of a structural causality, what would be 'spatial determinism' (Soja 2009, p. 33). Instead, in spatial reading, space allows, and is allowed by, subjects.

In their introduction to the edited volume *Taking Place: Location and the Moving Image*, Elena Gorfinkel and John David Rhodes, emphasizing the importance of space and place in cinematic production and analysis propose shifting the order of background and foreground in film analysis by bringing forward the background and pushing the foreground behind (2011). Even though this is a necessary move towards a 'spatial reading,' this insight can be furthered by also analyzing the ways in which the two grounds implicate each other.

While geographical knowledge and methodology became available for other disciplines, the discipline itself started appropriating the methodologies of other social

science and humanities disciplines. Edward Said's *Orientalism* defined the 'orient' as 'imaginative geography,' Franco Moretti's *Atlas of European Novel* (1992) discussed the geography of 19th century European novel as charting (and inventing) the "new geography of nation-state." Tom Conley's *Cartographic Cinema* (2007) (following his *Film Hieroglyphs: Ruptures in Classical Cinema* (1991)) suggested films as maps: he states: "[I]n its first shots, a film establishes a geography." Conley also proposes 'cartography as a way of viewing cinema' (p. 2)

Within the discipline of Geography this turn encouraged geographers to question the scientific claims of their discipline and the relations of power underlying the production of geographical knowledge. One result of this epistemological shift was to interrogate what kind of geographical knowledge had been produced within the cinematic medium and how it affected the way real geography is perceived. In *Place, Power, Situation, and Spectacle: a Geography of Film* (1994), Stuart Aitken and Leo Zonn offered "geographical investigation of cinematic spaces and places." They state that "the way spaces are used and places are portrayed in film reflects prevailing cultural norms, ethical mores, societal structures, and ideologies," which should lead the geographers to pay attention to the "production and consumption of space and place in cinema" (1994, p. 5). In the same edited volume, Jeff Hopkins analyzes how cinematic landscape and the society are connected: "cinematic landscape is [...] an ideologically charged cultural creation whereby meanings of place and society are made, legitimized, contested, and obscured" (Hopkins 1994, p.47). He further claims that the ideological effect of the film

lies in its capacity to fabricate “an imaginary space and time, a cinematic space” which is the result of the combination of “iconic forms and the iconic illusion of motion” (p. 52). Sharing a similar concern with Hopkins, Marcus Power and Andrew Crampton in their introduction to the edited book *Cinema and Popular Geo-Politics* critically reflect on the relation between “reel geopolitics” and “real geopolitics.” In their article “Reel Geopolitics: Cinemato-graphing Political Space” they argue that film “represents a constitutive element in the production of political geographies” and “political spaces, places and landscapes are implicit tools in the production of film” (2007, p. 5). For that reason, they argue, there is a need to investigate “the filmic authorship of geopolitics or the production of geopolitical meaning in cinematic texts and their intertextuality with other geopolitical landscapes and discourses” (p. 3).

Against the backdrop of historicist analyses, the literature on nation and nationalism witnessed the emergence of works focusing on the importance of geographical and cartographic knowledge in the production of nations and nationhood. Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* complemented his major argument of nation as ‘imagined community’ with the ‘material’ conditions of imagination (2006), Thongchai Winachakul’s *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (1993) on the production of Thai nationality through national cartography, traces how during the process of nation-building, different ethnicities and their territories are reduced to geographical locations within the new spatiality of Thailand. Raymond Craib’s *Cartographic Mexico: A History of State*

Fixations and Fugitive Landscapes (2004) discusses the formation of the state and the production of nation through maps and mapmaking as a process of ‘realizing the nation;’ and James Scott’s seminal work *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (1998), reflects on the productive function of geographical and cartographic knowledge production within the nation-building process.

Spatial reading aims to put these literatures into productive dialogue by tracing similar concerns as they arise across different conjunctures. The two effects of the spatial turn: on the one hand, the attention to the material bases of nations and the importance of space (spatial production) within nation-building process, and, on the other, the mutually productive relationship between cinema and space in the cinematic space and the space of representation, drive this dissertation. Doğu brings together these two spatial technologies of state and cinema. First, I discuss Turkish nation building through the production of nation-space by modifying and re-defining the national territory with cartographic and geographical techniques (bounded by national borders) in accordance with a national (Turkish) identity. Second, I discuss cinema and its relation to nations and nationhood through its spatial character that combines politics of representation with the politics of space.

CINEMA OF CONTESTED SPACE(S)

I specifically engage in a dialogue with the literature on the cinematic representation of ‘contested space(s).’ The analysis of the cinematic representation of social identities and their representation in general, who inhabit a contested space—one

that is subject to multiple sovereignty claims—should prioritize that space. ‘Spatial reading’ permits a discussion of space as the main stake of cinematic representation of these sites. The checkpoints, borders, and landscapes in Palestinian, Basque, Irish and Armenian cinemas, and in the cinema of the Indian North-east, feature as main issues in these films. These contested spaces abound in national cinemas where cinematic representation is directly connected to political representation, and cinematic space to political space.

Scholarly works on the American Western genre attests to the primacy of political geography as underlying the production of the genre. Even though the works I have considered include the issue of the representation/misrepresentation of the characters, they focus on how such representation is informed by the spatial perception of the American “West.” For example, in his seminal *Gunfighter Nation*, Richard Slotkin argues that Westerns mythologized the westward-moving frontier of violence to legitimate Euro-America's act of violent (dis)possession of the Indian land (Slotkin, 1992). Besides being methodologically similar to my study's shift of the focus from the representation of the body to the space it occupies, these scholarly works on the Western genre contextualize the films within a very specific time in American history: the moment of integrating the “west” into the white-European political cartography, and the rise of the genre and its revivals parallel the renewed political attempts to incorporate the region.

Michael J. Shapiro (2004, 2007) looks at Post WWII John Ford movies to show the ways in which the West is integrated into the American way. Shapiro introduces

space as a character in the narrative, not just a background on which characters move, and connects the cinematic space to the actual space to which it refers. He further states that what is at stake in these films is not the characters that are (mis)represented but the space within which the characters live. This (mis)representation, in turn, works to delegitimize the Indians' right to the space and to politically and socially disqualify them in inferior roles. He introduces the concept of "cinematic nationhood" where "film has been involved in the cultural articulation of the nation building and sustaining the project of the states" (2007, 32). Shapiro looks at how "myth of the west" is invented in the western genre. In the article "The Demise of International Relations" he analyzes *Stagecoach* (John Ford 1939) and claims that the "ethnoscape" of the film is depicted as a "haunted land" (p. 36) in which "whites are represented as destined to displace unreliable, dangerous savages" who are shown as characterologically unfit to negotiate a shared political order (p. 38). Shapiro claims that the identity between characters and the landscape is explored in all of Ford's westerns. In *My Darling Clementine* (1949), there are "two inseparable impediments to the expansion of a stable and peaceful domesticity to the west: the untamed landscape, which encompasses and dominates the lives of the west's people and hitherto untamed, violent characters, who imposed the rule of the gun" (2004, 153).

Steve Neale, in his work on the post-war pro-Indian westerns, "Vanishing Americans" (1998), claims that what made these films possible and popular was, on the one hand, the change in the government, especially in the office of war information, in

terms of the geo-political concerns, which resulted in adapting liberal policy “that favors negotiation, co-existence and mutual respect towards the Native American population, on the one hand, and tolerance and integration on the other (1998 11).” This liberal stance, according to Neale, that lasted until 1960s and supported by both Liberals and conservatives, was a way of integrating Indians. As a result, the revival of the genre in post-war context as pro-Indian took place within the nexus of various discourses and the political power’s changing geopolitics of the region. While the territory was appropriated as commodity for capitalist expansion, Indians were to be citizens of the nation, losing their “special status” in “Euro-American law as ‘domestic dependent nations’”(19). Analyzing another revival of the genre in 1990s, in “The New Western American Historiography and the Emergence of New American Westerns,” Rick Rowland and Edward Countryman claim that this reemergence of Western can be attributed to the popularization of a particular historiography looking at westward expansion of the Euro-American settlers claiming that the “frontier” does not exist (1998 185). This new cluster of movies, for the authors, re-defines the Indian through white lexicon:

[W]hat is so appealing about this vision of Indian culture is that it seems to reflect foremost a just society where individual accomplishments are rewarded and private property rights respected, as well as a co-operative communitarian circle where no one is left to fend for him/herself psychologically or materially (p. 189).

In a different context and different genre, yet with similar concerns, in “The Space in Film and the Film in Space: Madrid’s Retiro Park and Carlos Saura’s Taxi,”

Benjamin Fraser (2007) analyzes Carlos Saura's *Taxi* (1996) through what he calls "urban approach" which combines in the film analysis both 'on-screen' and 'off-screen space' of the film. He claims that "the meaning of on-screen spaces must be tied to the production of off-screen spaces" (2007, 16). According to Fraser, from an urban approach, the film does not have spatial sensitivity. He points that the park in the film functions as an aesthetic background that is fixed and uncontested. However, through reading the park's spatial history, he claims the film cannot give a sufficient critique of how the park itself has been commodified to turn it into a "tourist space" and how the government's security apparatuses and the discourse on crime in the park work to legitimize this kind of global spatial reordering of city-spaces. Fraser claims that by failing to critique this spatial violence, the film reproduces the aesthetic ideology backing this spatial reconstruction of the park. Implying that the film is also a part of the tourist aesthetic he offers a film analysis: the analysis would "require the twin investigation of how urban space is used in film as well as how the film is used in urban space" (2007, 30). Fraser states that beyond paying attention to the violence to which the space is exposed, spatial analysis should include the construction of space itself as a form of violence and how the violence against minorities is an integral part of the construction and reorganization of this space.

CINEMA STUDIES IN TURKEY AND THE FILMS OF DOĞU

In recent works on the representation of the other in Turkish cinema, specifically the representation of 'Kurds,' the films on/about them are criticized in terms of the

character portrayals without any attention given to the politics of space regarding the very space they inhabit. For example, Müslüm Yücel in his *Kurds in Turkish Cinema* (2009) dismisses almost the entire Turkish cinema as assimilationist by (mis)representating the Kurds in inferior roles. This analysis insufficiently takes Kurdishness as a homogenous entity that can be represented in a unified truthful way; moreover, the focus on misrepresentation misses the differences between the modalities through which the characters in the films perform their identities and how these modalities are mediated by differential positions the characters embody. The generalizing attitude of Yücel against the representation of Kurds in Turkish cinema is repeated by another recent work, this time, on the emergent Kurdish cinema. In her introduction Mijde Arslan, the editor of the book *Kurdish Cinema: Deterritoriality, Border and Death*, , proposes the concept of ‘Kurdish cinema’ as correcting the misrepresentations of Kurds in Turkish cinema. Despite the validity of these critical analyses by the Kurdish scholars and writers against the homogenizing effects of ‘national cinema’ they use an ideological analysis inadequately: while tracing the ideological effects within the texts, their analysis does not pay attention to the larger politico-cultural field within which both the filmmakers and the texts assume their functions. Both works overlook the material determinations of political and social history of cinematic production such as the state of emergency rules and the censorship with which the filmmakers constantly struggled.

The methodology of spatial reading is also necessitated by the nature of the ‘Kurdish question’. As I will discuss in the following chapters, what embodies the

Kurdish question is Kurds' "right to space" (Lefebvre 2009): the Kurdish question is a spatial question, more specifically a question of sovereignty. As mentioned earlier, the films of Doğu are part of a particular problematization of that space to which Doğu refers. The directors were not primarily concerned with the representation of a particular (ethnic/national) Kurdish identity although they were—and still are—aware of the Kurdish struggle and its human costs. The representation, however, was informed by the way the space inhabited by Kurds was perceived by the filmmakers. Two main subject positions within which Kurds are represented in cinema, *the smuggler* and *maraba*, which I discuss in the second and third chapters, should be taken as reflections of the 1960s (national) border anxiety and the ideal of socialist revolution in the East of 1970s, respectively. I argue that the filmmakers were mainly interested in Doğu and its rehabilitation through national (spatial) modernization.

Throughout the dissertation, I track how the directors perceived that 'space' before and during the time of production. My argument is based on the assumption that the 'politics of representation' is implicated in the 'politics of space'. In order to study the nexus of 'representation' and 'space,' I trace how the signifier Doğu has changed across different films and periods. While 'Doğu' has been used within these films to define that particular space, its meaning and narrative function transformed according to spatial regimes to which that space was subjected. Following this assumption, my main criticism of the recent works on Kurdish representation is that they miss that the Kurdish question is about contestation over space and that the state's response to that question has been

spatial. In an analysis of cinematic representation as part of the spatial claims and strategies, the main question should be: what are the spatial stakes informing the filmmakers in their representations of Kurds, and what are the spatial effects of such representations? The main problem is not whether Kurds are misrepresented but how their representation is related to the spatial politics of the Turkish nation-state. The issue of representation, cinematic and at large, should be discussed in connection with the question whether the representation grants the right to space. Finally, the importance of space in the analysis—and the importance of space in Kurdish question—is that the emphasis on the cinematic representation of the body of the Kurd cannot understand the problematization of Doğu—either as an obstacle to the production of national space (state discourse) or as its excess (Socialist discourse) – and moreover, it abstracts the body from its spatiality and reduce the Kurdish question to the question of ‘individualized’ cultural rights, which could be remedied through multicultural policies that incorporate capitalist modernization into a new governmentality of the nation-state.

CHAPTER OUTLINES

The representation of Doğu in Turkish Cinema took place at the conjunction of various events; the form and the function of this cinematic space changed in different moments and contexts. I specify four periods when a particular event, or series of events, affected the representation of Doğu. Taken together, they provide a historical account of the emergence of Doğu as cinematic space. The first period is the 1960s during which social realism prepared the contours of Doğu as cinematic space. I discuss Doğu’s

representation in relation to what I call ‘realist turn’ in Turkish cinema and the ‘national cinema debate’ that shaped the 1960s cinematic production. The second period covers the 1970s socialist / revolutionary cinema and its connection with Doğu. Doğu as cinematic space within socialist/revolutionary cinema bears the main debates and tensions of the socialist movement and the place the Kurdish movement occupied within. The third period covers the armed conflict between the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) and the Turkish Army that started in 1984. The war and the concomitant state of emergency effective in the provinces of Doğu throughout the 1990s on the one hand and the emergence of what film scholars called ‘new Turkish cinema,’ a revival of film production after a decade of politico-aesthetic crisis in Turkish cinema as a result of 1980 military coup, on the other informed Doğu as cinematic space. I end the chapter with the lifting of state of emergency rule in 2004. During this period of armed conflict the East witnessed massive ‘forced migration’ to the mostly western cities, especially Istanbul. While Doğu turns into an empty space, Istanbul becomes the new cinematic space of Doğu. In the last chapter, I shift my focus from Turkish cinema to the emergent Kurdish cinema. The shift implies remapping the geography to which Doğu corresponds. In a similar way that Doğu functions as a discursive space as part of the production of Turkish nation-space, the same geography is a part of another territoriality, Kurdistan. As such, the East of Turkey corresponds to the North of Kurdistan. The last chapter discusses Kurdistan as cinematic space and reads it in parallel with Doğu.

Chapter II: Social Realism, Borderland and Nation-Space

Following the main methodological argument that the cinematic representation should be analyzed through spatial shifts and claims, in this chapter I study the two spatial shifts that brought the cinema to the East, to the space inhabited by Kurds in the context of state realism, informing the various spatial techniques of the state in an effort of produce “national territory” (Lefebvre 2009). The argument of the chapter is that realism, both in cinematic and state form, defined the form and content of the nation. Although I start the representation of Doğu in 1960s, within the framework of social realism constituting the aesthetic and political form of representation, the chapter goes back to the 1950s to trace the formation of the aesthetic of cinematic realism in Turkish cinema. The first spatial shift to Anatolia, considered by the directors as the authentic space of national culture, was to find a secular interpretation of national culture. The second shift to the South, through the film adaptations of Yasar Kemal’s stories helped formulating the narrative tension of realist cinema around the antagonism between the feudal elite and the landless peasant brought together within the economy of an impossible love story. These shifts were triggered by a desire to find a modern/secular national identity in Anatolia. Thus, the filmmakers’ commitment to portray their subjects ‘realistically’ can be seen as an attempt to merge the ‘real’ of the camera and the ‘real’ nation; a belief in the camera’s technological capacity to show what is in front of it is matched with the belief in the existence of a real ‘nation’ that can be captured optically. The 1960 military coup was the necessary –yet unfortunate—turning point for the

emergence of social realism as the new political language of cinematic production. Yet by capitalizing on the anxiety over the national borders, the post-coup military power renewed its spatial strategies in the East: modifying national census queries to exclude any reference to different ethnicities, Turkicising toponyms to ‘reflect’ homogenous (national) spatiality were some of these strategies. Films I discuss bring together the narrative tension of the realist cinema between the feudal elite and the landless peasant and the ‘border anxiety.’ The national border and borderlands are central components in the social realist films of Doğu. By reading ‘social realism’ and ‘state realism’ together, the chapter discusses the spatial stakes of cinematic Doğu in the 1960s.

Chapter III: Socialism and Farmland: Doğu as Space of Revolution

The aesthetic and political consensus behind social realism dissolved during the second half of 1960s. The result was the emergence of two camps: socialist/revolutionary cinema followed the socialist movement and its cultural politics, and ‘national cinema’ makers defined their aesthetico-political engagement through nativist and traditionalist terms. Within socialist/revolutionary cinema, Doğu as cinematic space was informed by the following factors: The emergence of a socialist public sphere, the anti-colonial internationalism of Socialist movement, and the revival of a Kurdish movement and its alignment, until the mid-seventies, with Turkish socialism. The chapter discusses Doğu as ‘space of revolution’ aiming to eradicate feudalism.

In the chapter, I argue against the claim that the films of the period were Orientalist and misrepresented the Kurds in inferior roles. Firstly, framed around the

socialist politics of the period, ‘class antagonism,’ not ethnicity, was the main modality through which Doğu became visible in cinema: the feudal elite became the target of criticism, not Kurds as an ethnic category. Secondly, due to the political claims over the space of Doğu and the political engagements of the filmmakers, the cinematic representation was shaped by socialist realist aesthetics. I argue that rather than being orientalist (eroticizing and exoticizing an ahistorical space) these films engage in the possibility of historical progress through the revolutionary agency of the character of ‘maraba.’ Although the figure appears as the prime focus, the maraba is a reflection of socialist spatial politics. The politics of space emerged at the intersection of the anti-imperialist and anti-colonial theory and struggles, and prioritized national spatial modernization.

Chapter IV: The Long 1990s and the Empty, Flooded village: War and the Spatial Politics of New Turkish Cinema

In the 1980s, Doğu became an unknown, undecipherable space. This was an important shift from the 1970s when progressive filmmakers had a clear vision (Socialist gaze) of Doğu and were adamant supporters of socio-economic development as a panacea to the ‘problem’ of the region. The result was: maraba disappeared as the main protagonist in the 1980s. Instead of agricultural fields, snow-capped mountains became the main site of the few films of the decade on Doğu. This perspective loss, aggravated by the armed conflict and state of emergency, lasted until the mid-1990s when critical engagement in Doğu became possible as a result of a series of political events. The brief

positive political atmosphere at the beginning of the decade due partly to the post-cold war political order evolved into intense conflict towards the mid-1990s. Turkish cinema engaged in Doğu through the effects of the war on the region, forced migration being the most important. About three million Kurds had to move to the western cities. Cinematic Doğu is shown through ‘empty, flooded village’. While the migrant became the main protagonist of the films and attracted the scholarly attention, the immobile (sedentary) body that stayed behind within the empty region expanded the diegetic space back to the East. Through the obstinate/sedentary body, the films trace the effect of war on the region. Yet for those who left the East behind, the act of leaving does not bring relief, and the migrant bodies are marked by Doğu in the form of skin color and accents. The spatial order they are subject to in the East continues to determine their life in the western city.

Chapter V: Kurdish Cinema, Remapping National Space

Recently there has been a debate as to whether or not there is a Kurdish cinema, asking, do Kurdish films exist without a national cinema framework? While including Kurdish cinema within a national cinema framework poses a methodological problem as it lacks institutional structure, nation-state and national territory, recent critical works on the nation and globalization’s effect on cultural production allows us to reevaluate the scope of cinematic production and its relation with space.

While Kurdish cinema is understood as part of a national struggle, close analysis of frameworks of Kurdish film production demonstrates the films cut across both national and transnational perspectives. In this chapter, I discuss Kurdish cinema in terms of its

spatial imaginary: how it negotiates the political struggle for (territorial) sovereignty and the decentralized existence of the filmmakers. The mapping of cinematic space within Kurdish films and its relation to other maps help to show its difference from Turkish cinema. While this spatial imaginary deconstructs Doğu as part of Turkish nation-space, Kurdish cinema does not imagine another nation-space. Rather, it proposes a non-violent cartography replacing the violence embodying the (re)production of nation-space.

CONCLUSION

While the literature referred to above exemplifies reading cinema spatially, its direct transmission to my project has several complications. I use spatial reading not to demonstrate how the cinematic representation disqualifies Kurds' "right to space," but to partly discuss why a proper analysis should not take the representation of Kurdish 'identity' as the center of analysis. Therefore, I propose studying the filmmakers' perception of the space of Doğu at particular moments. Since the main argument is that what drove the cinematic production on Doğu was (national) spatial modernization, the main conflict is determined by spatial anxiety caused not by the Kurds as an ethnic category, but by the space they inhabit as impediment to national modernization. The issue with the cinematic representation has not been the containment of spatial contestation, but redefining it through the terms of national modernization. However, as I discuss in the fourth chapter, the 1990s was a turning point in contesting the state's project of (national) spatial modernization in new Turkish cinema. Yet by that time,

Turkish cinema, unlike in 1970s, granted no revolutionary agency to its characters against the state.

CHAPTER II: REALIST CINEMA, DOĞU, AND NATION-SPACE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyzes the representation of Doğu as part of the social realist movement in Turkish cinema. Social realism refers to the progressive left-wing filmmakers' attempts to reflect on the contemporary socio-economic problems (Refiğ 1971). The movement, although lacking a manifesto or an institutional structure, rather referring to a mode of cinematic engagement that brought together several filmmakers and film critics, emerged within the context of the social reformation process in the post-coup 1960s (Daldal 2003). While the cinematic representation of the East was an achievement in and of itself, for the region had been outside the space of representation both politically and aesthetically since the foundation of the Republic due to the successive state of emergency rules under which it had been ruled by the military governors with extraordinary powers, its cinematic representation within social realism aimed at incorporating this contested space into the space –time of the national, which, successive governmental policies long failed to achieve. Although the filmmakers had to work under the strict censorship regulations imposing the official discourse of the 'nonexistence' of Kurds as separate ethnicity, it's also the ideology of realism that structured a particular way of (modernist) representation. I take the cinematic representation of the East through realism as part of the production of nation-space. In order to make this 'productive' connection, I will argue that 'realism,' besides and more than a cinematic style, worked as the main logic structuring the production of the modern

nation and of the region since the foundation of the Turkish state in the 1920s. Social realism was both the product of this logic and serves as a ground where it is the most ‘visible.’ The realist cinema was part of creating national cinematic language through the representation of the ‘real’ nation, whereas the discourse of nation as reality was part of the ‘realist turn’. The relationship between ‘realism’ and ‘nation,’ stretches beyond cinematic production.

The main concern of this chapter is how the conventions of realism as it emerged within context of Turkish cinema was related to the production of Doğu as cinematic space. A historical account of the emergence of realist cinema through the textual analysis of the first realist films of the 1950s, (*Karanlık Dünya/Dark World* (Metin Erksan 1953), *Toprak/The Earth* (Nedim Otyam 1952) within the wider context of ideological shifts in the 1950s will be followed by the discussion of realist cinema’s travel to the East in the 1960s. This initial discussion will inform the analysis of how Doğu became space of reality in realist films in the 1960s. After the 1960 military coup, the decade witnessed the emergence of social realism as a more politicized cinematic language. I will discuss how the military coup affected the politics of cinematic production in general and of cinematic realism in particular, and how it affected the representation of Doğu – or its introduction into the cinematic space. The textual analysis of three social realist films on Doğu will accompany the discussion of the nexus of realism and nation to understand the logic of realist representation and its relation with national space. The chapter ends with the discussion of another ‘realist’ film of the

decade Seyyit Han (1968) by Yılmaz Güney. The discussion of the films will provide insight into the logic and limits of ‘social realism’ within the context of the Turkish cinema of the 1960s.

As part of an attempt to understand the cinematic representation of Kurds within the context of the ongoing ‘Kurdish question’, my starting point in this chapter is the continuity between the ‘realist’ films of the 1950s and the films about Kurds in the 1960s when they became the subject of cinematic representation. My attempt, however, was already challenged by the stickiness of the issue of representation and realism when I started the project. The films were ‘about’ Kurds who were not represented as Kurds but through certain categories conforming the basic contours of cinematic production of the era. The troubling part was to reconcile realism and realist cinema with the disappearance of Kurds in it. Although both the ontological (absence /presence) as well as epistemological (how to know if they are Kurds when they are not represented as Kurds) premises of my initial concern over representation was promising to pursue a rich analysis, the translation of the theoretical concern over cinematic representation of Kurds in the Turkish context, namely discussing the representation of Kurds in terms of their material presences but cinematic absences gravitated towards the argument taking cultural production as part of the ideological state apparatuses (Althusser 1994). Yet the close study of the politics of cinematic production in 1950s and 1960s shows that, cinema, especially the realist cinema, and the political power had more of an antagonistic relationship with each other than the former being the apparatus of the latter. However,

1960s were one of the few moments, especially the first half, when the political power supported the emergence of a critical cinema, i.e. social realism. It was within social realist political aesthetics that we see the representation of Kurds Turkish cinema -- although not as Kurds. At that stage of the research, I changed my main question from why Kurds were ‘not’ represented in Turkish cinema (namely, why any reference to Kurdishness, such as the language, disappeared from the representation), to why the Turkish cinema *went to the East*, the space inhabited by Kurds and interrogate an answer to the first question within this larger ‘spatial’ problematic. Shifting the focus from the Kurds to the space they inhabit helps understanding the ideology of both cinematic production and of space; the two have an intrinsic connection. I located cinema’s spatial journey to the East within the context of my current argument that the cinematic representation aims to incorporate this contested space into the space –time of the nation. What made the representation of the region in the 1960s possible was the effect of what I call the *realist turn* both in the definition of nation and in Turkish cinema, both of which converged in the 1950s. To support my argument, I trace two genealogies that converged in 1960s as the conjuncture of cinematic production on Doğu. First is the genealogy of social realist cinema within which the East entered the cinematic space. I will discuss realist turn in cinema through two spatial shifts in cinematic production and in connection with the emergence of ‘national cinema.’ Within the general realist turn, nation and the ‘real’ converged in the 1950s. The other genealogical attempt is the analysis of what I call *state realism*, which refers to the state’s attempt to produce nation as reality through

several spatial technologies of production in an effort of produce *national territory* (Lefebvre 2009). The East was subjected to the techniques of state realism to the most extreme measures due to its contested history. In the East, the cinematic realism and state realism intersected, the latter informing and limiting the former. I argue that when social realism arrived the East what it saw as ‘real’ was already the product of these nationalizing spatial techniques: I call Doğu as new national(ized) spatiality. The appropriation of *Doğu* to define the narrative space of the films on the East, both by the filmmakers and the film critics, is one indication to trace this intersection. As discussed in the first chapter, Doğu emerged within the state’s discourse to address the region. The discourse of Doğu worked to decouple the space it refers to and its inhabitants by way of reducing it to a geographical extension of an assumed (national) center.

In the following first section is the discussion of the emergence of realism within the context of Turkish cinema. Through the discussion of the first ‘realist’ films, I will locate the realist turn within the context of a general political, ideological and aesthetic transformation in the 1950s’ Turkey. The section is followed by the discussion of the emergence of social realist cinema in the 1960s and its relation to the 1960 military coup and within the context of the ‘national cinema debate’ of the decade. The debate informed both the production of social realist films and the hermeneutic space within which they are received by the film critics. The next section discusses *state realism* and the arrival of social realism to ‘Doğu’ through the discussion of four seminal films of the period at the intersection of two realisms. *Toprağın Kanı/The Blood of the Earth* (Atıf

Yılmaz 1965) is about an idealist petroleum engineer, the head of the oil refinery in the eastern town of Raman. The film revolves around the engineer's fight against the "imperialist" America and the feudal system both preventing the drilling with the fear of, as the engineer suspects, losing both the town and the nation to the rapid modernization that the oil revenue would bring about and ending their dependency on both sides.

Hudutların Kanunu / Law of the Borders (Lütfi Ömer Akad 1966) is about Hıdır, an ex-smuggler (on the border of Syria) whose attempt to quit smuggling, backed by the army officer and a primary school teacher, fails due to the still strong feudal system in the region. *Muradın Türküsü/The Song for Murat* (Atıf Yılmaz 1965) deals with the villager Murat's love affair with the daughter of the mighty landlord who refuses Murat's request to marry the daughter. Yet the Landlord is outmaneuvered by the power of the people of the town. All three films use actual places, incorporate regional details and deal with the contemporary problems of the time of their production: border, nationalization of petroleum, feudalism, land reform, etc. and all three are well-known examples of social realist cinema. My argument regarding these films and how they deal with the East is that being part of the social realist cinema, their primary concern was national (spatial) modernization. I will end the chapter with the analysis of *Seyyit Han* (Yılmaz Güney 1968). A director of Kurdish descent, Güney had already been a part of Turkish cinema both as actor and screen writer. *Hudutların Kanunu* was based on one of his short stories and he was also the main character in the film. *Seyyit Han* was his attempt to make a realist film (Soner 2005) in defiance of the dominance of commercial cinema. He worked

with the well-known cinematographer Gani Turanlı whose work with the director Akad made him an important name in social realist cinema. However, although film was loyal to conventions of realist cinema (location shooting, documentary style, focusing of ordinary people) to the extent of looking like a documentary film in some parts, it was banned by the censorship committee by distorting reality. While the film shows the subjective nature of reality, it is also a wonderful example to discuss the *ideology* of social realism and its connection with state realism.

REALIST TURN, CINEMA AND NATION

In 1948, in response to a long-term anxiety on the part of the Domestic Film Producers Association over the dominance in the domestic market of the American and Egyptian cinemas, the government introduced a substantial revenue tax cut for domestic films to invigorate the film production. Not only enjoying numeric dominance, American and Egyptian cinemas also shaped the production culture in Turkey throughout the 1940s. The majority of domestic films were remakes of popular American adventure films or Egyptian melodramas (Arslan 2011). During the following decade, the number of domestic films exponentially increased⁵ (Makal 1991). The same year, in 1948, the Association organized a competition to select the ‘best Turkish film’ (Başgüney 2010). In the early 1950s, a group of new film directors such as Metin Erksan and Lütü Ömer Akad entered the still-nascent film industry withholding a desire to put an end to the

⁵ According to Makal, between the years of 1916 to 1944, the average number of annual film production is 1.46. Between 1945 and 1959 the number rises to 41.46. (Makal 1991, 9)

dependency on foreign films, offering instead the creation of a national cinematic language. In 1952, Association of the Friends of Turkish Cinema is established and the following year, organized the first Turkish film festival. Also in 1953, a survey was put by the Sinema⁶ journal to investigate the first “Turkish” film as a possible starting point for this national cinema (Özön 1995). 1950s witnessed these attempts at nationalizing the nascent industry that had been under the ‘foreign influence’ and finding a national cinematic language that would be different from the other cinemas.

One response to the need to creating a national cinematic language in the 1950s was what I call realist turn in ‘national’ cinema. The main premise of the turn was representing ---or more properly, reflecting--- the ‘real’ problems of the ‘real’ people, that is in turn taken as ‘the nation’. Unlike the historical films of the era journeying into the past for search of an authentic national identity, or the films of the previous decade under the influence of stage arts that had a pro-western take on the national identity ⁷, the

⁶ The journal was started by Nijat Özön and Halit Refiğ in 1950s as a reaction to the popular cinema magazines such as Yıldız (Star) and Yeni Yıldız (New Star) focusing on the lives of film stars. Sinema journal would focus on film critique and debates. (Başgüney 2010)

⁷ Within the dominant historiography of Turkish cinema, the early history is divided into two periods: Up till the 1940s, during the single party era, the industry was “under the influence of ‘the single man’ Muhsin Ertuğrul” who, coming from a Theatre background assimilated the cinematic medium into the conventions of stage arts, using artificial sets and imitating “western” representational style. The second period is started in the 1950s; “multi-party era -- multi-director film industry”. While the periodization of the history of cinema according to political historiography is arbitrary, as I argue in this chapter, the 1950s were a turning point in terms of the desire for ‘national’ cinema’. I discuss this turning point in terms of the shift from the use of artificial sets to location shooting which, as I will analyze as part of a larger politico-ideological shift in the 1950s. The historiography written by Nijat Özön in his 1962 book “History of Turkish Cinema” remained unchallenged until recently (for a critique of dominant historiography of Turkish Cinema, see Dilek Kaya Mutlu’s “The Russian monument at Ayastefanos (San Stefano): Between defeat and revenge, remembering and forgetting”). In his “Turkish Cinema” entry to “The Oxford History of World Cinema,” Yusuf Kaplan uses the same arbitrary periodization. (Kaplan 1997)

realist cinema focused on the here-now, as the time of the nation. The turn, however, not only referred to a particular cinematic style and methodology, it also referred to a spatial shift in cinematic production. The great majority of the films made until 1950s took place in (the vicinity of) Istanbul (Özön 2010).⁸ The realist cinema shifted the narrative space from Istanbul to Anatolia. Like its contemporary Italian neorealism, realist turn in Turkish cinema involved going out into the everyday life of the common people, documentary style shooting, and ethical attachment to the social world. However, unlike the latter which took urban as space of reality, realism in the Turkish context defined the rural Anatolia as its space of reality. Despite the difference, both Italian neorealism and realism in Turkish cinema had strict commitment to space (Rhodes and Gorfinkel 2011). Both movements' criteria for realism is shaped by the reality of that particular spatiality they aimed to comment on. Also both movements diverged from the naturalistic tendency in the convention of cinematic realism that emphasized the verisimilitude between the image and 'reality.' While both have ethical commitment to factual world⁹, it is not simply the visual reproduction of it. As Andre Bazin discusses in "Ontological Bases.."

⁸ The cinema historian Engin Ayça's periodization of Turkish Cinema defines the pre-1950 period as 'urban cinema.' According to Ayça with 1950s 'rural cinema' period starts. Although Ayça's historiography of national cinema differs from that of Nijat Özön and Giovanni Scognamillio (Atam Görücü 1994), he also uses the same periodization of 'from a cinema under the influence of Theater to the proper cinema of the 1950s' (p. 44). According to Ayça's historiography, during the first 'urban cinema' period, cinematic production, with the annual production average of 4-5 films, was under the influence of Republican ideology of national modernization and imposed modern –read urban—lifestyle through films adapted from theater plays. It's only in the 1950s, the decade called by Özön as the *period of cinema-makers*, that instead of constructing the (idealized) rural (villages) on the stage, location shootings of the rural began. (Özön 2010, Scognamillio 1987, Atam and Görücü 1994)

⁹ David Overbey, in his Introduction to "Springtime in Italy: A Reader on Neo-Realism," starts with a long quote from Roberto Rossellini where referring to the definition of neo-realism he says "For me, it is above all, a moral position from which to look at the world. It then became aesthetic position. But at the beginning it was moral" (quoted in Overbey 1978)

realism is taken not merely as reflecting whatever is in front of the camera but as the camera's ability to assign to the image the status of (ontological) reality: the cinematic image itself constitutes the criteria of reality. What is 'captured,' the image, is not the reality of that particular place; the image of the place works as the content of realism. The image and reality are connected only through the mediation of an epistemological order. In addition to the capacity of the camera, the relationship between the camera and reality, whether the former reflects the latter or not, is based on how the reality is defined within that epistemological order in the first place. In the Turkish context, whether the realist cinema was representing the real 'nation' or not is not the main concern of the chapter. What will be proposed as the methodology, rather, goes to the opposite direction: taking the nation as the product of realism. The expedition of the realist directors to the rural Anatolia to 'discover' the nation, considering the productive function of realism, can be seen as containing a desire to 'invent' that very nation. If realism works through not reflecting but creating its reality, nation's, an abstract category, becoming the object of realist cinema, should be read as its process of 'real'ization, namely its production as reality¹⁰.

Two films by the directors Metin Erksan and Nedim Otyam who made their directorial debuts in the early 1950s were the first 'realist' attempts in Turkish cinema. Erksan's *Karanlık Dünya/Dark World* (1953) was on Aşık Veysel, the prominent blind

¹⁰ The coupling of real and the nation is based on two premises: one is that nations do 'exist' and that they can be 'seen.' This secular - phenomenological interpretation of nation became popular among the Kemalist left in 1940s and 1950s. I will discuss the effect of secular interpretation in the next section.

folk poet. The film aimed to give a socio-economic background to his art and life. To make the film, Erksan went to the Sivralan village in the city of Sivas, Veysel's hometown, located in the middle Anatolia. Otyam's *Toprak/The Earth* (1952) was the first film dealing with the issue of land ownership and the still existing feudal system in rural Anatolia, a topical issue of the period. Both directors set out to explore the 'real' Anatolia. However, the directors had to alter their films drastically to pass through the censorship committee. (Hakan and Barış 2008, Ozgüç 2005, Ozön 1962, Scognamillio 1987). At the first encounter with the committee, the films were completely banned for their 'unrealistic portrayal' of the rural Anatolia. Before the films were released, their depictions of the lack of health clinics, and the still pervasive smallpox (which had claimed Aşık Veysel's sight); the undergrown crops, the barefoot children and villagers in patched clothes were cut and replaced by either retakes or documentary footages from foreign films. In *Dark World*, joyous villagers celebrating the end of smallpox in front of the hospital in the village [that added in the post-censorship editing process], voluminous crops, and well-dressed characters replaced the 'unrealistic' rural life depicted on the screen: not uncommonly, the political power decided what is real and what is not. The tragic-comic character of this encounter between the directors and the government-appointed censorship committee, which would recur in the following four decades, should not divert the attention from a more subtle aspect of the encounter. While it is partly about the directors wanting to reflect the social realities of the national society and the political power through which it is repressed, it is also about the nature of this

particular social ‘reality’. At this point, the key question is ‘why did the directors choose the underdeveloped rural Anatolia as their object and space for their realist films?:’

Anatolia as ‘space of reality...?’ A clue lies within the period when the realist turn was unfolding, the time when, as Raymond Williams defines it, realism became a main “intent” behind cinematic production (Williams 1977).

REALISM SPACE AND NATION

As one side of cross-referentiality of the real and the nation is to assume equivalency between visible and the real, and the productive function of the discourse of reality, other side is redefinition of the nation through the axis of reality. From the perspective of nation, the coupling of real and the nation is based on two premises: one is that nations do ‘exist’ and the other is that they can be ‘seen.’ This secular - phenomenological interpretation of nation became popular among the Kemalist left in the 1940s and 1950s. Cinematic realism was a response to the dominance of the foreign films and genres in the domestic film market and it was part of creating a national cinematic language. However, the realist ‘intent’ and the itinerary of realist cinema had been formed not in cinema per se but within the larger socio-political transformation beginning the second half of the 1940s. Realist cinema in the Turkish context offered a secular interpretation of national identity. Both the secular definition of nation and its representation in realist cinema was a response to ‘crisis of modernity’ experienced by the secular intelligentsia witnessing the rising popularity of religious conservative ideology since the mid-1940s. Mahmut Makal’s autobiographic realist novel “Bizim

Köy/Our Village” (1950) captures the transformation and the concomitant secular anxiety quite aptly. Makal was trained as teacher in Village Institute, the educational centers built by the founding Republican People’s Party upon the proposal by the Ministry of Education in the 1930s to spread Kemalist modernist reforms of the new republic throughout the country through selected representative native populations.¹¹ Bizim Köy reflects Makal’s difficult experiences as teacher in his village. For Makal, the lack of a school building in the village came as no surprise considering the level of poverty: the village was completely outside the purview of the government. To prove his point Makal provides stark details on everyday life in the village throughout the novel. However, what was disconcerting to him was not so much the fact that the government left the villagers to their own destiny or how resistant the villagers had become to the idea of having a school in the village (while barely having bread to eat); it was the appearance and the mushrooming of religious orders in his and neighboring villages and the network of financial support from the villagers these orders were enjoying while he, as a teacher, was still struggling to build a school. The number of his students drastically decreases after the orders turned the mosques into religious schools for teaching Quran. The novel, through Makal’s observations, witnesses the increasing power of religious authorities in rural Anatolia. The novel in this way, predicts the conservative Democrat Party’s

¹¹ The Village Institute project was to an important extent inspired by the Soviet socialist experience. A group of select primary school students were enrolled in these institutes to become educators to teach in their own villages. The students not only learned reading and writing but also learned agriculture, engineering, art, medical expertise. The novels and the stories written by the writer-teachers highly informed the realist literature and cinema in the following decades. The Village Institutes are closed down by the Democrat Party government as being “communist nests” defaming religion.

ascension to power in the 1950 general elections, and the party's support by the same religious orders.

The peak moment of the crisis was probably the 1950 general elections when the modernist Republican People's Party (RPP) lost to the Democrat Party (DP). The party was formed by the members of the RPP parliament, mostly big landowners from the Western regions, DP was supporting a more liberal economic model and its members had left the RPP in the mid-1940s due to its statist economic policy and formed the DP. In a very short period of time, with the support of its populist discourse, the DP managed to attract the votes of the rural population who had been marginalized by the high-modernist agenda and elitist ideology of the RPP, namely Kemalism. As a response to the victory of the conservative ideology, the secular intelligentsia formulated a more egalitarian, socialist interpretation of Kemalism. The new interpretation contained a critique of Kemalist elitism and its rigid modernization program, and came up with a solution to Kemalism's tradition-modern dichotomy. The interpretation was based on a secular(ized) Anatolian tradition as the basis of Turkish national identity (Karacasu 2002).

As part of the secular intelligentsia, the realist directors' journey to rural Anatolia, should be seen as part of the re-appropriation of that space to the account of modernization. The realist cinema took up a *modern tradition* crafted by the socialist interpretation of Kemalism. The selection of Asik Veysel's life story for the realist *Karanlık Dünya* film is meaningful in this respect. Veysel was an important figure in the heterodox Alevi tradition, outside the influence of mainstream Sunni Islam. His poems

carry a materialist worldview and he was at the time teaching music at the village institutes. *The Earth* by Nedim Otyam, on the other hand, was a critique of the feudal class represented by the DP. In the 1950s, cinema became a space of hegemonic struggle between the DP government, who controlled the machinery of censorship, and the realist directors, who were critical of the DP ideology. The censor committee's harsh response to the first realist attempts epitomized the decade-long war of maneuver between censorship and the directors.

Later in the decade, the realist films gave up their direct attachment to the present as it had made passing through the censorship an impossibility. Instead, the films of the later 1950s retained only a thematic connection to the present focusing more on the representation of Anatolian (national) culture. The works of the socialist writer Yasar Kemal became a main source for the films of the later 1950s. With these adaptations realist cinema made its second spatial shift, towards the South. Kemal's stories blend a meticulously detailed portrayal of the landscape and the people of Southern Anatolia with the oral traditions of the region. His Kurdish family migrated to the Southern Cilicia region during the Crimean War, where the population was composed of the Turkomans and the Kurdish people (**Hébert and Tharaud 1999**). His stories were influenced by both the Kurdish oral Dengbejî tradition, and the Turkoman epics. Both Turkoman and Kurdish peoples had had violent encounters with the Ottoman administration during the Ottoman centralization process and their oral traditions on which Kemal's stories are based chronicle these encounters. These stories were outside the influence of the State's

Sunni Islam, too and having been written from a Socialist perspective (Gürsel 2008), they avoid metaphysic and fatalistic worldview. Possessing such qualities, these stories were the perfect source for realist cinema such as Lütü Akad's *Beyaz Mendil/White Handkerchief* (1955), *Karacaoğlanın Karasevdası/Karacaoğlan's Melancholia* (1959) and Atıf Yılmaz's *Alageyik/Red Deer* (1957).

Even though these films are based on love stories, the way the narrative flows reflects the stakes of the realist cinema of the decade. In each of these films the love affair between the male and female characters gets interrupted by a representative of the feudal ruling class – the landlord, the *beg*, the *agha*, etc. – either in the form of the rival or the parent of the young woman. The young men fight the landlord to marry the young women, but the action of the *beg* is portrayed against the 'tradition' approving the marriage of the loving partners. The tradition in the narrative---embodied in the form of the assembly of the elders--- facilitates the action (i.e. progress) of the male's resistance against feudal injustice. The narrative economy of the films expels the feudal class--- comprised of the landlord, the *beg*, and the *agha*--- out of the tradition favoring the anti-feudal agency of the male character.

In *Karacaoğlan'ın Karasevdası*, the orphan hero, Karacaoğlan, and the daughter of the landlord fall in love. Karacaoğlan asks the assembly of the elders to talk to the landlord on his behalf and ask him for the daughter's hand in marriage. The landlord refuses and does not even negotiate with the assembly. However, as a tradition, the landlord can only refuse a proposal of marriage if the candidate cannot fulfill his one

wish. The wish must be extremely difficult to fulfill so that if the candidate realizes it he will prove his suitability as groom. However, after Karacaoğlu fulfills his wish, the landlord goes back on his promise and gets condemned by the assembly. Similarly, in *Alagevik*, the elder woman's speech in front of the crowd is crucial. The speech comes after the fellow villager Halil's fiancé is kidnapped and forced to marry to the landlord of the neighboring village. After the speech, the villagers raid the landlord's house and deride the landlord:

Our tradition does not allow marrying an engaged woman to another man. The landlord broke the tradition; we must bring him into line!

In none of these late 1950s realist films does the action have a metaphysical source --- unlike the melodramatic films of the early decade where destiny, fate, and God were the sources of human (inter)action. While tradition has a central place in these films, it is defined in secular –practical—terms: it facilitates human action especially when encircled by the feudal order. Even though the narrative time is left ambiguous, the films are successful at reproducing everyday life on the screen on the material level; all the films take place in actually existing villages and the camera incorporates the details of the village life with the supervision of Yaşar Kemal: dresses, tools, ornaments, the buildings, etc. are used as central parts of the narrative. What informed the production and the reception of these films was the consensus between the directors and the film critics on the necessity of creating a national cinema. National cinema was, indeed, the primary

hermeneutic criteria among the film critics writing on these films. The reception of *Alageyik* by the film critic and historian Nijat Özön is a good example:

In terms of its heroes, geography, and the relationship between heroes, *Alageyik*, among all [...] films was the one that carried the most ‘from ourselves’ [...] It successfully integrated the village inhabitants into the film” (emphasis in original, Özön, [1959] reprinted in 1995).

As Özön’s reflection shows, the criterion for the national identity of the films is whether they are carrying anything ‘from ourselves.’ While this phenomenological account of the nation may sound arbitrary as to what really makes something ‘ours’ or who this ‘our’ is, both the films and the hermeneutic field within which they are received successfully collapse the real with the national and vice versa. The success of realist representation in this way does not lie in the attempted verisimilitude between representation and what it represents through ethnographic details incorporated into the cinematic representation; rather, it is the ability to assimilate these ethnographic details into an abstract national identity.

THE COUP, SOCIAL REALISM AND THE NATIONAL CINEMA DEBATE

In 1960, DP was ousted by military coup. The premise of the coup was the allegation that the DP government was destroying the secular pillars of the Republic. The coup was perceived as a revolution, giving way to a more open and progressive cultural and political atmosphere, by the intellectuals on the left who were intimidated throughout

the 1950s by the government run ‘communist hunts.’ For the film directors whose films had been sternly censored by the government appointed censorship committee, the new era appeared quite promising as the new constitution of 1961 promised the long waited liberal social reforms including allowing union rights for the cinema workers (Makal 1991). Although in 1963, the new socialist Workers’ Party of Turkey’s (WPT) application to the newly appointed Constitutional Court for the abolishment of the censorship committee on the premise of its unconstitutionality failed, the State Council got appointed as the court of appeal to the decisions of the committee, which until that time had been final (Istanbul 1980). The State Council indeed reversed many committee decisions banning or censoring mostly social realist films on account of threat to national security and ideological propaganda (Özgüç 2000).

Social realism emerged within this cultural-political conjunction as a progressive response to the socio-economic problems caused by the DP regime in the 1950s (Daldal 2003). One of the earliest films in the movement, *Gecelerin Ötesi/Beyond the Nights* (Metin Erksan 1960) dealt with the social corruption that the DP’s policy of “creating a millionaire in every neighborhood” brought about (Altmer 2005). The anti-DP core of the social realist films made the social realist films legitimate critiques for the post-coup political power. The film *Yılanların Öcü/Revenge of the Snakes* (Metin Erksan 1964) is a good example demonstrating the political power’s change of attitude towards realist cinema. Based on 1958 novel by another prominent Village Institute writer, Fakir Baykurt, the film was about the villager Dark Bayram’s struggle against his fellow

villager Haceli, who with the support of the mukhtar, buys a piece of land directly in front of Bayram's house. Even though the land is the common property of the village – and, therefore could not be owned or sold—the mukhtar grants permission in exchange for a cash donation to the village coffers. Bayram's opposition to Haceli backed by mukhtar results in him being blindfolded and beaten in the latter's house. When the district governor comes to the village for inspection, Bayram's mother informs the governor of the incident. The governor forces the mukhtar to undo the deal and stop the construction.

The film subtly juxtaposes the state appointed idealist district governor and the pragmatist mukhtar, as the government representative in the village. The progressive state representatives such as teachers, military officers, engineers, and doctors would occupy a central position within the social realist films of the 1960s. The inclusion of such characters reflects both the optimism the progressive directors felt towards the period's new political order and worked pragmatically to secure the release of the films without being squashed by the censorship. Not surprisingly, however, the censorship committee banned *Yılanların Öcü*. However, this time the director Metin Erksan, together with the crew, would visit the President General Cemal Gürsel for a special screening in the presidential office to convince him that the committee's decision was baseless. After the screening, and nervous waiting for the film crew, Gürsel's comment on the film was reassuring: "These are realist pictures from Anatolia. The situation is more pathetic than how it is portrayed; you even embellished it" (Özgüç 1995). The President's sympathetic

attitude towards the realism of the film reveals the post-coup political power's policy towards rural Anatolia. Whereas the DP perceived the periphery as its locus of power, supported by the local power holders withholding the feudal structures, for the modernizing secularist power, the periphery was perceived as an underdeveloped space that needs to be incorporated into the national modernity.

STATE REALISM: DOĞU AS SPACE OF NATIONAL REALITY

With its ethical claim to 'reflect' social and material reality, social realist cinema's encounter with the East and the Kurds in the region who had been excluded from 'national reality' is a curious instance of depicting a heretofore 'non-existent' entities through the conventions of realism. Within the earlier discussion on realism, I followed a constructionist argument and claimed that realism works through producing its own content rather than reflecting a preexisting phenomena. In the Turkish context, realist turn in cinema was shaped by the left Kemalist filmmakers and was part of the creation of national cinematic language. From the earliest realist films onward, 'nation' was the content of realist representation. Keeping in mind this real-national confluence, the driving question of the following section is *what was it that social realist cinema portrayed as reality in the East? A reality of what?* Yet, I am not after an authentic reality that was 'missed' by cinematic representation. I am interested in where that *cinematic reality* came from. And how was that reality sutured into the national in the Kurdish context? While social realism's, above mentioned homogenizing attitude towards the phenomenology of social existence within national borders is an important part, in the

context of the East, this is not the whole account of the encounter. To claim that social realism was able to show nation only by misrepresenting the outside reality misses another important process of ‘realizing’ the nation, which is what I call *state realism*. Both cinematic realism and state realism aim to produce nation as phenomenological, i.e. visible and experiential. When social realism arrived the East, the region had already been subjected to the conventions of this other realism. I use *state realism* to refer to both ontological and epistemological practices through which nation-states, during the process of nation-building, determine the limits and forms of existence within the national territory. The states determine what and who is entitled to exist, and how a particular existence can be known through *techniques of reality* such as census, cartography, geography, etc. In the process, the nations become more than what Benedict Anderson called ‘imagined community’ (1993). Through these techniques, nations become phenomenological; they become visible and experiential. The flipside of the process is the stories of disappearances that the new national reality sanctions. The cinematic representation of the East is formed at the intersession of these two realisms: social realism brought the desire for modern/secular nationhood, and a cartographic anxiety¹² (Krishna 1994) determined the form and limits of engagement.

¹² In his *Cartographic Anxiety: Mapping the Body Politic in India*, Sankaran Krishna defines cartographic anxiety as foundational coping mechanism in postcolonial nations with the problems caused by the process of founding a modern nation based on the principles of rationality and scientificity. While not a postcolony, in the Turkish context, as an ex-Imperial space, the anxiety over borders such as mapping the nation, fixing the borders, disciplining the border population has also been foundational due to the complex post-World War I reordering of the map of the middle east.

Although the coup and the new constitution brought about a more liberal political atmosphere for the emergence of a socialist public sphere, and allowed the survival of social realism as cinematic praxis, with a new momentum, the state resumed its Eastern policy in 1960s that had eased down during the previous decade. The prime reason for the new ‘nationalizing’ momentum in the 1960s was the remobilization of the Kurdish movement, which had been dormant since the late 1930s in Turkey. The remobilization came after the Kurdish movement in Iraq launched a revolution against the Iraqi state in 1960s after they had been denied equal rights under the new post-coup Iraqi constitution¹³. The 1960s Kurdish movement in Turkey was to a certain extent influenced by the Iraqi Kurdish resistance. This new rapprochement between the two Kurdish movements was a cause for alarm, especially for the prospect that the aim of the Kurdish movement in Turkey would be a part of the reunification of a Kurdistan that had been divided into four parts after World War I. In June of 1960, the post-coup military government arrested 485 Kurdish notables and exiled 55 influential Kurdish figures (Gunter 1997) to the Western cities. While this move was designated to facilitate the assimilation of the Kurdish population into the Turkish national identity, the government took further actions to make the population invisible. Within the Eastern region, the toponyms that still were not in Turkish, were subjected to Turkicising. After the 1965

¹³ The Kurdish leader Molla Moustapha Barzani had migrated to the Soviet Union after the demise of the Republic of Kurdistan in Mahabat in 1947. When the general Qasim took over power in Iraq, he invited Barzani to discuss their accommodation in Iraq and the new constitution. However, negotiation broke out and Barzani started a resistance, which would last until the failure in 1975. (Barzani 2003)

census, the statistical information based on the ‘mother tongue’ within the national population kept classified.

SPATIAL MODERNIZATION ON THE BORDER OF THE NATION: *THE BLOOD OF THE EARTH*
AND THE *LAW OF THE BORDERS*

Towards the middle of *Toprağın Kanı/Blood of the Earth* (Atıf Yılmaz 1965) the petroleum engineer, in a voice tinged with anger, opens up to his psychotic son: “You always wonder why I am stuck in this goddamn place. I am here for these people. Our petrol will save them, too.” His statement comes in the form of a slip of tongue in a psychoanalytic moment, triggered by the son’s deteriorating psychological health, and the father’s futile attempt to explain his choices. While the father’s alcoholism too is apparently caused by that “goddamn” place, we don’t learn what constitutes the “our” to whom the petrol belongs or the “them,” who are apparently in need of saving. However, the son’s immediate delirious response to his father’s humanism does offer some clue: “We will leave and they will stay here, huh? These mountain men, these savages?” The son’s choice of words to define the people who would stay “here” is far from random: ‘mountain men’ and ‘savages’ had been the prime names for the Kurdish population of the East in the official nomenclature of the state. What is fascinating in this scene is that, within the overall narrative economy of the film, we witness son’s all abnormalities, suicide attempts, and conspiracy theories. While the content of his conversation with the father can be taken as another ‘crazy’ talk coming from his mouth, its uncanny familiarity throws the words outside the diegesis right into the historical moment at which it was

produced. *Blood of the Earth* was one of the first films to be shot and set in the East and it was the first film to speak about ‘we’ and ‘them’ in the context of Doğu. By putting the overly familiarized discursive pieces into the mouth of the psychotic son character, the film, breaking the state sponsored scholarly silence on the region, offers a fleeting critique of the State practices in the region. However, the on-the-edge dialogue, especially the ‘unconscious’ critique it contains, ultimately disappears within the overall narrative economy of the film. A classical example of the social realist cinema of 1960s, the film situates the dialogue within one of the most pressing ‘national causes’ of the period: nationalization of petroleum. The film takes place in the Raman village located on the Turkish side of the Iraqi border. The idealist engineer, who believes that the oil revenue will benefit the socio-economic development of this Eastern village, fights against the American oil company running the oil fields, which, according to him, obstruct the drilling. However, the American company is not the only enemy the engineer fights. The local notables are also addressed as the enemy of a different kind.

While the tension between the engineer father and the son represents the opposing ends of the official spectrum vis-à-vis the East and the inhabitants, the prime tension of the film is the one between Hasan and Hüseyin the two siblings who have diametrically opposed moral universe and ethical attachment to the space they inhabit. Hüseyin is a technician who had studied in a craftsmanship school in the city of Diyarbakir, whereas, Hasan, called as the ‘Sheikh,’ is a local tradesman running the smuggling economy in the town. At the beginning of the film we learn that while Hüseyin was at school in the

Diyarbakir, Hasan ‘bought’ Hüseyin’s fiancé from her parents. When Huseyin comes back to the town, he asks his brother not to come in between him and her as they are already engaged. Yet he fails to change Hasan’s deed. From the beginning, Hasan and Hüseyin are presented through their position to modernity and civility: schooled Hüseyin who engages with his lover versus trader Hasan buying a woman from her family against her will. The former is schooled and the latter is illiterate.

More importantly though, the main juxtaposition between Hasan and Hüseyin is drawn through spatial terms: through their positions vis-à-vis the national border. After beaten up by Hasan and his friend, Hüseyin is picked up by the engineer and brought to his house for medical treatment. Soon he earns the trust of the engineer and starts working on the refinery as a technician. Together with the engineer, Hüseyin works towards building a modern city on the shoulders of the refinery and creating jobs for the local population. To achieve the modern dream, Hüseyin also joins the engineer’s fight against ‘imperialist’ America which ‘does not want the oil to be found.’

The patriotic and nationalist intent of the engineer and Hüseyin is opposed by the feudal authorities, whose wealth come from border smuggling. The landlord and the tradesmen also resist the drilling, fearing that it would attract the labor power they were controlling for smuggling and destroy their socio-economic power. Situated within this national problematic, *respect for borders*, namely, taking the borders as not only territorial/physical but also as ethico-political presences separate Hasan from Hüseyin on the one hand, and the feudal class and the engineer on the other. Working for the refinery

becomes a patriotic duty to protect the nation-space from the imperialists as well as the feudal elite breaching the spatial integrity of the nation through smuggling. However, the difference – between Hasan(s) and Hüseyin(s), enunciated through two different axes, is proposed as contingent that would be overcome by socio-economic development, should the extra-ideological patriotism of the engineer's techno-utopianism materialize: "Our petrol will save them, too!" By locating the main conflict between the siblings, the *Blood of the Soil* tames the enunciated difference. At the end of the film while Hassan is shot dead after his failed attempt to rob the refinery, Hüseyin marries the engineer's niece: a perfect metaphor for the national unison within a restored nation-space.

National border is an important component also in *Hudutların Kanunu/Law of the Borders* (Lütfi Ömer Akad 1966). *Hudutların Kanunu* takes place in the Deliviran village located on the Turco-Syrian border and revolves around the peasant Hıdır. He is the brother of one of the smugglers who got shot at the beginning of the film while smuggling goods across the border. After his brother's death, Hıdır decides to quit smuggling. Instead, he wants to build a school in the village so that the children of the village would not "share the same fate as his." However, as the landlord owns the entire land, and wants to use the local labor for smuggling, working on the land is not an option for the villagers. The landlord also opposes the construction of the school because children are an important part of the smuggling economy. The arrival of a new lieutenant to the village, who is in charge of border protection, automatically puts him against the local power holders. The lieutenant not only increases security at the border but also

forces the landlord to share the land with the peasant for farming. Already willing to quit smuggling, Hıdır sides with the lieutenant and agrees to ‘settle’ on the farm.

However, the landlord tricks Hıdır into smuggling by threatening to expel him from the farm if he does not transport his herd across the border. Hıdır accepts to do it to stay as farmer on the land. However, when he rides the herd across the border, landmines get detonated and Hıdır barely gets out alive. After he later learns that it was a set-up by the landlord, he kills him and his men in return. At the end of the film, Hıdır is seen escaping from the lieutenant who will arrest him after the killings. To escape capture, Hıdır crosses the border into the landmined area between Turkey and Syria. While he negotiates with the lieutenant, Hıdır’s son also joins him. At the end of the film, Hıdır steps on a landmine outside the border and dies. The symbolic function of Hıdır’s border crossing at the end of the film is crucial. At first, he restores the territorial integrity of the nation by killing the landlord and chooses death by stepping outside of the national border. We see one more function of the national border in addition to the one of separating the nation-states, here the border separates life and death. Prior to its release, *Hudutların Kanunu* was banned by the censorship committee twice and finally passed on the third with the condition that at the film’s end, Hıdır would give his son a moral lesson by condemning smuggling and making him promise never to become a smuggler and go to school.

In addition to film’s nationalizing attitude towards the reality it portrays, its interpretation betrays the national hermeneutic space that informs both the production

and reception. The interpretation of the film by the film critic Ali Gevgilili in the leftist cinema journal *Yeni Sinema*, (New cinema) is revealing how the film was perceived by the critics of its time:

[*Hudutların Kanunu*] is an impressive film about the major contradictions of Turkish society.” [...] The state representatives are helpless ... vis-à-vis the semi-feudal capitalist economic structure. [...] On the one hand, conflict is between labor, as represented by Hıdır, and capital, as represented by the landlord; on the other hand it is an internal conflict of capitalism as seen between the landlord and the tradesman. [...] The film is neither totally epic, naturalist nor realist. The narrative technique turns the film into a lively, independent and unfailing work consistent with [the director's] national qualities (1967, p. 7, emphasis added)

Both *Toprağın Kanı* and *Hudutların Kanunu* clearly bear the concerns of the post-coup political culture: an anxiety with the growing power of the landlords vis-à-vis the villagers and the state, and the entry of the modernist state representative as a savior. The feudal elite in the films assume a double menace: towards the townspeople and the villagers whom they exploit and expose to death through smuggling, and towards the nation-state by violating its territorial integrity by breaching the borders. Yet, during an interview after the release of *Hudutların Kanunu*, the director Akad's response to the criticisms as to how realist the film was in terms of state-society relationship in the region adds a critical layer to the film: Accepting that the state-society relations in the film does

not represent the situation in the region, Akad admits “if we wanted to represent the reality, our film could not have passed the censorship.” (Özgüç 1995)

Muradın Türküsü/The Song for Murat (Atıf Yılmaz 1965) takes place in a small town in the vicinity of the city of Diyarbakır. The romance between the young villager Murat and Meliha, the daughter of the landlord, gets interrupted by Meliha’s father, who is determined not to marry his daughter to an ordinary villager. After the assembly of the elders in the town fails to convince him to change his mind, the *mufti* of the town is called upon by the villagers assuming that the landlord would not dare refusing his judgment. However, himself failing to convince the landlord, the mufti releases a fatwa allowing Murat to abscond with Meliha as he believes the landlord to be an infidel, not allowing the lovers to marry. After much pressure from the villagers and the *mufti*, the landlord agrees to the marriage, offering one condition: if Murat kills his archenemy, the notorious bandit, Çoban Ali, he will allow the marriage. In reality, the landlord’s plan is to get rid of both Murat and the Çoban at the same time: if Murat kills Çoban, he reasons, he would inform the gendarmerie that Murat is a murderer, if Murat fails, it means Çoban will have killed Murat, the case will be closed. However, Murat discovers the scheme and forges an alliance with the Çoban against the landlord. Towards the end of the film, the villagers are seen camping in front of the landlord’s house protesting him for not letting Murat and Meliha to get married. Intimidated by the crowd, the landlord calls the gendarmerie to inform them a rebellion broke out in the village and the rebels are coming to loot his house. But when the gendarmerie arrives, the officers learn the real story and

arrest the landlord for misleading them. By opposing the tradition, which is respected not only by the villagers, the *mufti* and the gendarmerie, the landlord is excluded both from the town – and from the narrative.

Among the three films I discussed so far, *Muradın Türküsü*, with its emphasis on modern tradition, the gendarmerie as the savior of the villagers, its centering the narrative tension on the conflict between the feudal landlord and the common villager as well as its location shooting, recognizable place names that properly ‘situate’ the story within the national map, is the one that used the conventions of realism the most. However, even though the film takes place in the East, the characters speak in a “clean” Turkish without a trace of regional (i.e. ethnic) accent. Moreover, the soundtrack of the film is a generic folk music that does not bear any regional specificity, the town could be any town in any part of Turkey. By erasing any regional marks from the narrative, soundtrack and mis-en-scene, the film subtly incorporates the region into the homogenous national. Although the cartographic anxiety does not factor into the narrative through border crossing, the narrative clearly betrays its national desire through the antagonism between the landlord and Murat. If the latter’s romance with Meliha is understood as a threat for the hierarchical feudal order, then the landlord’s reaction makes sense as the protection of that order. The help of the villagers, the elders, mufti and the gendarmerie all boils down to the acting out of the desire for ‘horizontal comradeship’ (Anderson 1993) devoid of hierarchies embodying the old order. Murat, and together with him the entire village, contracts into citizenship after their protest against the landlord is sanctioned by the

gendarmerie. At the end of the film, what we have is the prototype of a ‘nation-space’ composed of smoothly functioning, undifferentiated people speaking in an accentless language. The role of the mufti, above all, still ties this modern nation-space to the ‘tradition.’ Yet, in the director’s future films after the socialist turn, the mufti figure and his alikes will disappear on the people’s side as the ‘class’ not ‘national culture’ will become unifying structure after the socialist turn. Later in these films, mufti reincarnates in the character of the Sheikh as the head of feudal system.

SEYYIT HAN AND THE LIMITS OF CINEMATIC REALISM

Hudutların Kanunu was not the only film that attracted the wrath of the censorship. The film *Seyyit Han* (1968) by Yılmaz Güney was also banned by the censorship committee. Also like *HK*, *Seyyit Han* was planned as a social realist film. In both cases, the directors had based their films on extensive research and observation; local costumes and accents were meticulously incorporated into the films. Made by the socialist actor-director of Kurdish origin Yılmaz Güney, who also wrote the story of *HK*, *Seyyit Han* was a realist film of a different kind. Unlike the other ‘social realist’ films of the period, where the narrative space is structured according to a national problematic¹⁴, Güney based the film on a Kurdish epic, giving her lead character a Kurdish name.

After seven years during which he had to finish off his blood enemies as the only condition to marry his beloved, Keje, Seyyit Han, the male protagonist of the film comes

¹⁴ *Hudutların Kanunu* was made as the first installation of the director Akad’s “Anatolian Trilogy” for which later he made the second installation in the northern Black Sea region, and the third in the western Aegean region.

back to his village triumphed on the day of Keje's wedding. As he learns later, during his time outside, the landlord, the groom in the wedding, who also had been in love with Keje, tricked the villagers into believing that Seyyit Han was killed by his enemies, and he would be willing to marry her. Trapped between the feudal hierarchy and his promise, Keje's brother is forced to accept the landlord's proposal for his sister. However, Seyyit Han's surprise return unsettles the ceremony. Keje wants to go back to Seyyit Han, yet has to prioritize his brother's 'honor' which would be stained if she cancels the wedding in the middle. The landlord gets uncomfortable knowing that Seyyit Han, his strongest enemy in the village, would avenge his trick. Yet also aware of Keje's love for Seyyit Han, the landlord sets up a deadly plan to save his honor. After the ceremony, he orders his men to tell Seyyit Han that he gives up on Keje and Seyyit Han should come and get her. His men catches Seyyit Han leaving the village. When Seyyit Han meets the landlord in the village, landlord puts one condition for Seyyit Han to get Keje back. Knowing that Seyyit Han is the sharpest shooter in the village, the landlord asks him to shoot at the center of a chamomile flower attached to an upside down basket. When he does, the landlord affirms that he now deserves Keje. As it turns out the basket with the chamomile covers Keje's head and Seyyit Han killed Keje from her forehead. To avenge Seyyit Han kills the landlord and his men and slowly disappears in the vast empty landscape at dawn.

While the narrative structure of the film resembles other social realist films, like the overbearing presence of the landlord, the oppressive feudal code, honor and exploited villager, the film avoids the modernist gaze that embodies social realism. We don't see

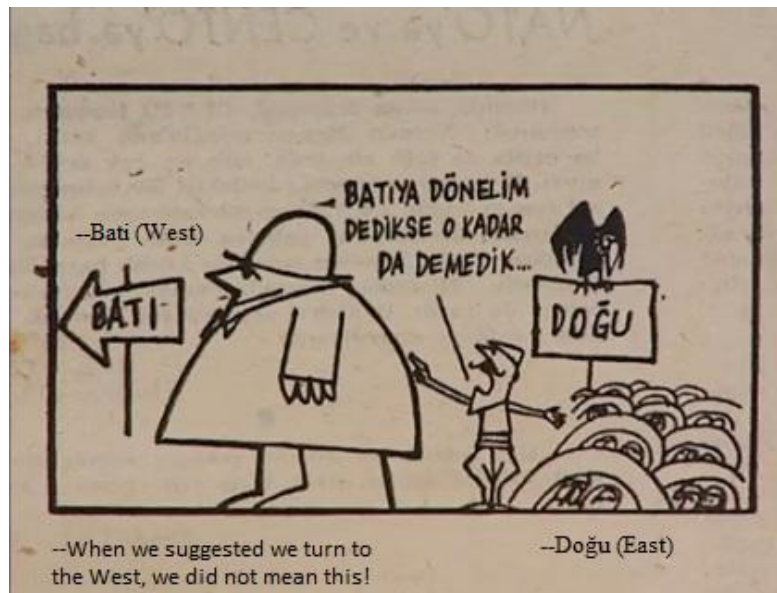
the landlord as the representative an economic class. The wedding ceremony is shot in documentary style and it encompasses the entire second half of the film. Yet the realism that is aimed at the film alarmed the censorship board. When it was submitted to the board for permission, the committee raised two objections to the film: Firstly, Keje was not recognized as a proper Turkish name and, secondly, the banners carried by the crowd during the ceremony are not part of Turkish wedding ceremonies. Emblematic of the limits of realism within the context of national cinema, the censor committee asked the director to change the name and remove the banners as unrealistic additions to pass the censorship. What is revealing in this encounter, however is that both the name and the banners are open marks of Kurdishness yet they function as unrealistic –negation of realism-- within this particular cinematic context. While the customs, traditions, costumes are deemed appropriate as part of national reality, the ethnographic detail through the wedding ceremony and the name of the bride, designated by the director as the realist content of the film, worked as a foreign mark ---or stain--- in excess of the ‘reality’ that would embody the nation.

CONCLUSION

What brought together social realist cinema and state realism is their ability – and intention, not to reflect *a* reality, but to produce the content of the reality they refer to. They both have ability to define what is reality through their system of representation. What interests me in this chapter is the convergence of these two realisms in the representation of Doğu. What I suggest emerged as reality (of Doğu) was the product of

the modernist gaze of cinematic realism and the state's techniques that create and legitimize a particular kind of realism. Yet, the filmmakers were aware of the limits of cinematic realism and the devised coping mechanisms to pass censorship. Akad's response to the criticisms against *Hudutların Kanunu* is testament. The interest in realism in Turkish cinema coincided with the anxiety over the future of the modern nation. Within social realist films, nation has always been a part of the chain of signification. The social realist directors' expedition to Doğu as part of rural Anatolia is an important component of social realism. While the realist turn brought about a new cinematic style and aesthetics among the film directors, it was the desire to redefine the nation on realist terms that structured social realism. In these films nation worked as the content of realist representation. In the 1960s, the arrival of social realism to Doğu corresponded to the cartographic anxiety over the national borders due to the revival of Kurdish movement during the decade in and outside Turkey. In the 1960s social realist films Doğu, as space of (national) reality is represented through national borders. Yet the narrative function of national borders was more than a cartographic presence, working to combine ingeniously two anxieties within the narrative of spatial modernization. By juxtaposing the characters based on their ethical attachment to the borders, social realist cinema equated being modern with the respect for the nation-space.

CHAPTER III: CINEMA, SOCIALISM, AND DOĞU



An over-sized politician, looking contently towards the West, where the nation is 'destined' to reach, happens to turn his back on the East whereby a 'tiny' peasant is shouting at him to grab his attention to the human silhouettes squeezed into the little cells, waiting under the threat of death ... The drawing is a typical example of the critique of the government policies on the East by the Left intelligentsia and the progressive media in Turkey during the late 1960s and 1970s: the dire situation of the region is the product of the State's neglect and its maltreatment by the Government. The Leftist critique was a turning point in the history of modern Turkey in terms of problematizing the State practices in the region, however, the emblematic drawing leads one uncomfortably to question: Who is entitled in the drawing to represent Doğu? And what/who is giving the entitlement? Is the drawing entitling the peasant by recognizing his 'voice' or is it the framed gaze that is entitled (hence the drawer, hence the newspaper) through the familiar words put into the mouth of the peasant --- they are hanging up in the air, anyways!--- which interpellates the peasant within a particular problematization of the region: Doğu as the space of underdevelopment. The tension between critical visibility of the East and its terms of inclusion as Doğu draw the premise of the chapter.

INTRODUCTION

The chapter examines how Socialist political and aesthetic movements affected the representation of the Doğu in the Turkish cinema of the 1970s. The ‘socialist turn’ in the representation of the region in the cinema was the result of certain interrelated incidents that took place towards the end of the previous decade: the long dormant Kurdish political movement gained a new momentum within the Socialist politics in Turkey and the arrival of Yılmaz Güney in the Turkish cinema radically changed –and challenged-- the culture of filmmaking in Turkish cinema. Coming from a Kurdish family, who migrated to the Southern Turkey in the 1930s, Güney had close ties with the Turkish socialist movement in 1960s and 1970s. Starting from his films *Umut/The Hope* (1970) and *Ağıt/Elegy* (1971), Güney invented the contours of socialist cinema in Turkey.

The State practices within the region and the international anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles were the main parameters of Socialism’s engagement in the region (Belge 1993), yet the two ‘anti’ struggles worked in opposite directions in terms of the way Kurdish issue was perceived within the Socialist left. While the international anti-colonial struggles helped the Socialist movement to perceive the problem of the Kurds within the region as one of oppression by the State as the dominant political power, the anti-imperialist direction of Socialism, that Turkey is an underdeveloped country due to its tie with the United States and that the Socialist movement should work towards the full independence of Turkey, led Socialism to frame the solution to the problem of

oppression *within* the borders of Turkish nation state.¹⁵ Within these parameters, Socialism redefined the problem relating the region as ‘Doğu Sorunu,’ the ‘Eastern Problem’. While, ‘Doğu’ had been used by the State to refer to the region as a geographical part of the nation, stripped of its ethnic and historical specificity and the “Eastern problem” as an issue to be solved through national modernization; Socialists, including the Kurdish socialists – until late 1970s—appropriated the “Eastern problem” as a *revolutionary* problem. Yet, its parameters were determined by the commitment, on the part of the Turkish Socialists, to the integrity of the *nation-space*. The ‘problem’ came to refer to the necessity of socio-economic development and land reform; and revolution to achieve them. However, while in its official incarnation, the discourse of socio-economic development aimed at concealing –and disqualifying-- the ethno-political content of the ‘underdevelopment,’ the Kurdish socialists and part of the Socialist Left represented by the Turkish Labour Party (TIP), insisted on the ethno-political dimension of socio-economic underdevelopment.¹⁶

¹⁵ In his discussion on Turkish Cinematheque Association, Hakkı Başgüney refers to the culturalist tendency in the anti-imperialist discourse of Socialist movement that, according to him, more than occasionally degenerated into a nationalist rhetoric that threatened to cripple the intended internationalism of the movement (2010). This is clearly seen within the field of cinematic production in the forms of the heated debates – and clashes-- between National Cinema and Cinematheque circles throughout the late 1960s.

¹⁶ The declaration of the Fourth General Congress of TIP, which led to its closure, reads as follows: “That on the East part of Turkey, Kurdish people live. That from the beginning, the fascist policies of the dominant classes have been used, at times in the form of bloody cruelties, and through terror and assimilation, within the region. That one of the main reasons for the underdevelopment of the region inhabited by Kurdish people, besides Capitalism’s law of unequal development, is the social and economic policies of the dominant classes informed by the reality of the existence of Kurdish people living in the region. That for that reason, framing the “Doğu Sorunu” in terms of the problem of Interregional development disparity is the extension of chauvinistic and nationalist views of the dominant classes. ”

The chapter examines how Doğu is (re)defined within Socialist theory and praxis and how this redefinition affected the cinematic representation of Doğu in the 1970s. The main tenors and character(s) of the socialist cinema will be analyzed in relation to the Socialist spatial imaginary. I discuss the cinematic representation of the East within the socialist films as part of its (re)production as ‘Doğu,’ as ‘space of revolution’ for socio-economic development.¹⁷ Although almost all films on the region made in the 1970s were heirs, in one way or another, of the ‘socialist turn,’ in this chapter, I will use ‘socialist film’ only to define politically engaged films, which will be the primary objects of my analysis. The ‘socialist film’ defines a certain political ‘tendency’ in cinematic production throughout the decade, rather than as a genre in itself. Indeed, the films I will analyze here have been categorized in the literature on Turkish cinema under different genres such as ‘comedy,’ ‘melodrama,’ ‘feudal western,’ ‘land and labor films’ and ‘village films’. (Özgüç, 2005; Dorsay, 1979, 1989). Socialism, with its emphasis on class-antagonism, feudal oppression, backwardness and illiteracy, was the main parameter of the films in question, however, not all films on Doğu during 1970s used socialist messages *within a political program*. Throughout the 1970s these tropes were shared by

¹⁷ Development was the main solution prescribed in the social realist films of the 1960s, as well. However, both the agency and the affective attachment to development changes in the 1970s films. In both *Hudutların Kanunu* and *Toprağın Kani* the state representative was the agent of development and occupied the center of the narrative. The Lieutenant in *HK* and the engineer in *TK* function as development agents, whereas in the 1970s films, the state representatives either disappear or given small roles. The state representative in one of the films is relocated outside the region by the government due to his amicable relationship with the native population which is deemed, by the ruling elite, subversive. While in the films I will discuss development is portrayed as necessity, its experienced impossibility within the narrative economy of the films forces the characters to revolt against the feudal authority that is seen as the beneficiary of the government support. We will come back to the issue of revolution later in the chapter.

almost all films on Doğu, yet only some of them used these as part of the Socialist politics. While selecting the films for analysis, the main criterion was whether the filmmakers, especially directors and the screen writers, were part of the Socialist movement. The political identity of the filmmakers was generally reflected within the political content of the film. I specifically focus on the political films on Doğu to trace the *spatial imaginary* of the Socialist politics through cinematic representations.

Both the Socialist movement and its effect on cinematic production virtually came to a halt with the 1980 military coup. In the 1980s, while the cinematic interest in the region persisted, both due to the culture of fear created by the military rule and the dismantling of the developmentalist ideology, which defined the Socialist engagement in the region in the 1970s, ‘Doğu’ as defined and visualized within in the 1970s films disappeared --- or went through a semantic shift-- leading to an ambivalent politics of representation. The comparative analysis of the socialist films of the 1970s and the films of the 1980s will help better seeing ‘Doğu’ as ‘the’ particular space imagined within Socialism.

ARCHEOLOGY OF DOĞU AS SOCIALIST CINEMATIC SPACE

What defined Doğu as cinematic space during the 1970s was the politics of representation formed at the intersection of anti-imperialist and anti-colonial movements that informed Socialist movement. This interstitial ideological positioning was productive of an ambivalent attitude towards the state: internationally recognized as the victim of dependent underdevelopment and internally oppressive political structure. The socialist

spatiality was predicated upon on the one hand the critique of the ‘oppressive’ state and on the other was called to duty on developing the region. This critique of the official neglect towards the region allowed the production of an iconography of underdevelopment by the directors: undernourished and sickly children, mud-brick houses, primitive plough, barren landscape. At the same time, this iconography was superimposed by the realistic reproduction of regional ethnographic details: dress code, body language, internal decoration, etc. At this point, it should be pointed out that there was a fundamental difference between ‘socialist’ films and the mainstream films that only copied the visual and plot structure of these films. Due to the cited influences, Orientalism has not been a major influence on socialist representation during the 1970s. While some of the characters are ‘orientalized’ within the visual economy of the films, the ‘class,’ but not ethnicity, was the main register of difference. During the 1970s, Doğu was hardly an *exotic* place for the filmmakers, it was a place of stark conflict and poverty. Orientalism goes against the tropes of national modernization to which all directors except for Yılmaz Güney subscribed during 1970s. The homogenizing logic of national modernization – the erasure of the dichotomy of the self and the other, rather than fixing them as binary oppositions-- prevented the Orientalist representation in the socialist cinema of the 1970s.

A historical analysis of the emergence of socialist cinema within the context of Socialist politics in the late 1960s and the main debates within cinema will be followed by the textual analyses of several films selected according to the above cited criteria. I

will start the film analysis with two films *Salako/The Fool One* (1974) by Atıf Yılmaz and *Endişe/The Angst* (1974) by Şerif Gören. These films were made in the year of the general elections and after the General Amnesty is declared by the new government¹⁸ *Salako* and *Endişe* determined the decade's two major –sometimes intersecting – narrative strands within the films of Doğu: 'maraba films' (through *Endişe*) and 'comedies' (through *Salako*). Maraba means landless peasant who works at the land lord's land in exchange for a share from the harvest and maraba films take 'him' at the center of their narrative. While a maraba lives on the share he receives from the landlord, he is not simply a share-cropper. I claim that more than a share-cropper, he is a new subject position emerged within the Socialist discourse to refer to the Kurdish peasantry. In the absence of an industrial working class, it's not surprising that part of peasantry becomes the revolutionary force in the socialist theory and practice. He resembles the 'agricultural proletariat'. Unlike a typical peasant or the villager, who had been considered illiterate and reactionary, maraba represents revolutionary mobility and consciousness; *he* is aware of his class position and organize with other maraba against the feudal oppression. Ismail Cem writing on the region at the end of the 1960s signals the emergence of this particular character: towards the end of 1960s, he observes, the peasants appropriated "the language of rights, justice, equality, and revolution" within

¹⁸ Both films are made after the Amnesty. Yılmaz Güney started the film during the Summer of the same year after he was released with the General Amnesty in May. However, during the shootings of the film he is imprisoned again on account of him shooting the district judge of the town where he was shooting the film. However, it's still not certain whether he was the one shooting the districts judge (Güney 2005). In *Salako* there is a reference to the new government.

and outside the (national) border (Cem 1970). During that period in a number of occasions, Kurdish peasants occupied and appropriated the lands they worked at “with their rifles¹⁹.” The character of maraba captures that ‘revolutionary consciousness.’ Both *Kara Carsaflı Gelin/Bride in Black Chador*, (1975) by Süreyya Duru and *Fıratın Cinleri/Jinns of Euphrates* (1977) by Korhan Yurtsever use that moment of armed encounter between the peasants and the landlords. The 1978 film *Kibar Feyzo/Feyzo, the Civilized One* by Atıf Yılmaz also ends with Feyzo shooting the landlord dead. While the feudal oppression is of prime importance, the maraba films prioritize the resistance and mobility rather than fetishize the oppression even though in most films the system is restored at the end. In comedy films such as *Davaro* and *Kibar Feyzo*, the feudal oppression is ridiculed rather than fetishized. The comedy form within socialist films is used as a strategy to curve the direction of the address of the political content. Instead of devising a form of satire where comedy and critique would overlap, the comedy films in question use two parallel narratives. The comedic factor usually provide a(n) – apolitical- - narrative closure to the political content. The films have two interlinked stories with different beginnings and endings. While the political content is enclosed through the comedy, the success of the films ---in terms of eluding the censorship—depends on locating the ‘apolitical’ comedic factor at the center of the film.

¹⁹ In response to the peasant ‘uprisings’ the State initiated a “general scan” by commandos to collect the guns from the villages in the major cities in doğu. The scan lasted several months and the commandos used systematic torture and humiliation by stripping the male and females naked in the public to force them to hand in their guns. (Cem 1970).

I will end the decade with two films, *Sürü/The Herd* (1977) by Zeki Ökten and *Hazal* (1979) by Ali Özgentürk. These films signify the end of feudalism in Doğu due to the arrival of ‘capitalism’ (in the form of modern agriculture and train in *Sürü* and the road construction excavators in *Hazal*) into the region. However, the way they interpret the possible effects of capitalism on the region and on the characters is quite different. While *Sürü* is a critique of feudalism, Ökten does not juxtapose it with the ‘modern’ technology and he traces catastrophic effects of capitalism on the nomadic life of a Kurdish tribe. At the end of *Hazal*, on the other hand, the excavators come to the village to construct a road that would connect it to the heartland. Despite the wills of the feudal ruling elite, the engineers triumph and at the end of the film; the drivers of the excavators salute the villagers with smiling faces as they drive into the village. The paper ends with the 1980s political cinema. This last part focuses on the effects of 1980 military coup on the cinematic representation of Doğu in socialist cinema. In 1980s, cinema’s engagement in the East continued without an overt socialist framework that defined the 1970s cinematic production and with a more cautious attachment to the region.

A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: END OF SOCIAL REALISM AND REDEFINING REALITY

Social realism and the relative freedom of expression enjoyed within and outside cinema was, somewhat ironically, the result of the military coup in 1960. The coup was the product of the secular bureaucratic alignment against the conservative DP. It was no surprise that the military government supported by the secular intelligentsia promoted the emergence of a socialist public sphere to counter the still strong religious-conservative

ideology. However, the alliance lasted until the general elections in 1965 when the DP's successor Adalet Partisi (Justice Party, AP) won majority in the parliament. Even though the socialist Türkiye İşçi Partisi (Turkish Labor Party, TIP) gained 15 seats it could not provide sufficient leverage to counter the change of the direction in the government.

The elections also directly as well as indirectly contributed to the dismantling of the already shaking consensus between the filmmakers and the film critics that were holding the social realist movement together by intensifying the ideological conflicts within the movement that resurfaced at the first Cinema Convention in 1964²⁰ and came to a point of no return after the foundation of the Turkish Cinematheque Association by the film critics situated on the Left of social realism's political spectrum. However, the breakup was only the reflection of a broader ideological clash within Socialism. The filmmakers who were the "auteurs" of the social realist cinema of the first half of the decade situated themselves on the 'nativist' end represented by the YÖN (Direction) and MDD (National Democratic Revolution) traditions arguing for the inadequacy of the Marxist class analysis in explaining a 'classless' society like Turkey (Atilgan, 2002). These filmmakers, such as Halit Refiğ and Metin Erksan criticized the Cinematheque circle as missionaries of western values and admirers of European cinema (Refiğ, 1971),

²⁰ What is called "blood feud" to define the relationship between the critics and the filmmakers continued throughout the 1960s. On the other hand, during the decade, both filmmakers and film critics pushed for legal reforms to counter-balance the censorship statute of 1939 which was based on the Law of Police Duties and Powers of 1934 (Law 2559) that had been in effect. The Convention was organized by the Ministry of Tourism and Information to bring together the state and the filmmakers, unionists, film critics, and producers to discuss the issues of censorship and funding. Several filmmakers, among them were the social realist film makers, unwilling to discuss matters of cinema with people (referring to film critics) who do not understand it, left the convention and protested the decisions. (Makal 1991)

while the film critics around the Cinematheque, who were staying closer to the TIP were vocal about their dissatisfaction with the national film production including the social realist experience (Başgüney, 2010). The film critic Onat Kutlar, also the co-founder of Cinematheque Association, wrote several articles in the Socialist magazine ANT (The Oath) criticizing the main contours of national film industry. The subject of the critiques was the capitalist mode of film production in the mainstream film industry that the filmmakers, even those social realists, take for granted. According to Kutlar, the financial organization of the industry, based on a bond system and managed by regional producers, was structured in a way that it was impossible to produce any social films outside the mainstream cinema (Kutlar 1967). While the content of the films were also the subject of many criticisms, it was taken only a symptom of the capitalist mode and relations of production²¹.

During the latter half of the 1960s, while the majority of social realist directors redefined their production as “national cinema,” the film critics and the film directors who were close to the Cinematheque circle and situating themselves within TIP, oriented themselves toward European and Third Cinema under the influence of anti-colonial and anti-imperial political movements. (Başgüney 2010) Unlike the filmmakers, the film critics like Onat Kutlar, Nijat Özön and Ali Gevgilili emphasized “class antagonism” as an important component of cinematic representation. Both *Hudutların Kanunu/Law of the*

²¹ Yet, in their response to the critiques, the filmmakers took up the fight along the line of a civilizational conflict between them, the nativists and the film critiques as euro-admirers.

Borders (1967) by Lütü Ömer Akad and *Seyyit Han* (1968) by Yılmaz Güney were welcome by the Association with excitement. Akad had an ambiguous relationship with the Cinematheque Association and TIP, whereas Güney had been a self-identified Marxist-Socialist even before he became a filmmaker²².

The film that finally satisfied the film critics within the Cinematheque circle – as a matter of fact the film is considered to be one of the masterpieces of Turkish Cinema-- came in 1970 by Yılmaz Güney. Written and directed by him, *Umut/The Hope* is the story of Cabbar, a phaeton rider, who migrated to the southern city of Adana to make living, probably as a result of the mechanization of agriculture which led to the high level of unemployment in the rural areas in the East (Beşikçi 1992). Cabbar loses his job as phaeton rider after a Mercedes car hits and kills one of his horses. After his attempt to borrow money from his bosses, old patrons and friends fails, and after a failed attempt at armed robbery on the street, he agrees to his friend Hasan's solution to their economic destitute by treasure hunting with the help of the local Imam. Cabbar sells his pistol to get the money to pay the Imam to lead the hunt. At the end of the film unable to find any treasure, Cabbar falls into delirium. The film is premiered at the Cinematheque Association. With its references to the Italian neo-realist film *Bicycle Thieves* (Vittorio De Sica 1948), *Umut* was defined by the critics and other filmmakers as the 'first realist film' in Turkish cinema (Refig, 1971). However, instead of its conformity to national

²² He was incarcerated for a published story which was claimed to be as "communist propaganda" (Soner 2005, Dorsay 2005)

culture (as the criteria of realism in social realist aesthetic), the critics assigned the status of reality to the ability of the film to depict class-antagonism between Cabbar as phaeton driver and the owner of the Mercedes who hit and killed the horse. The scene in the police station was a testament to its politics of representation. After the accident, the driver and Cabbar end up in a police station. The police officer treats Cabbar like a criminal while the owner of the car was given a seat and offered a drink. Even though Cabbar wanted to file complaint against the driver, the police officer does not take him seriously and even threatens him to put into jail if he insists on misbehaving. Finally, Cabbar is 'pardoned' by the officer thanks to the 'generosity' of the driver, even though Cabbar thought he should be compensated for his loss.

Not a social realist film in the way discussed in the previous chapter, as a film critic in *Yeni Sinema* journal, the journal of the Cinematheque Association, pointed out, the film was not realist in the socialist way, either: Cabbar's solitude, that he is not able to be a part of the class solidarity that is formed by the phaeton riders against the municipality's decision to ban phaetons from the city traffic, according to him, cripples the overall socialist message of the film. The critic asks why Cabbar is different from the other phaeton drivers and why while other phaeton drivers were going on strike Cabbar chooses to become a treasure hunter. The director's decision to portray him as solitary and that this is found odd by the critic is important as it reveals the difference between the director, Yılmaz Güney and the critic as to what constitutes 'reality' in the

representation. The difference is not strictly an ideological one. Both the director and the critic were members of the Leftist circle of the Cinematheque.

Cabbar's burden in the film is not strictly class-oriented, although he shares the economic destitute with his fellow phaeton drivers. While the director models Cabbar on his Kurdish father, who had migrated to the city of Adana, who also did treasure hunting, the critic expects the character to act like a member of the proletariat yet, the critic reasons, Cabbar acts more like a lumpen than a proletarian. However, I suggest, what is emphasized by the director as Cabbar's difference, that he chose the treasure hunting, interestingly an autobiographic addition, can be explained to be the ethnic "excess" of his character, modeled on Güney's own father, which is seen by the critic as a stain on the socialist narrative of the film compromising the pure class-interest of the otherwise proper proletarian Cabbar. Through the character, the director also hints at the difficulty of the migrant worker's mingling into the national labor²³. The critic's desire to clean the narrative off of all marks that compromises the dialectics based on 'class' is, as will be seen, reworked in most of the political films of the decade.

What was called a 'socialist cinema' dates back to the release of *Umut*; however, the 1971 military ultimatum that targeted the Left delayed the production of socialist films on Doğu, and the production of political films in general, until after the 1974

²³ As will be seen in the chapter, the tension between the 'ethnic identity' of the characters in the films and their 'class positions' is not resolved and in majority of the films the latter supplants the former. The space of reality, whether it refers to nation or to class, is produced as the space of "we" from which the atypical character --here, the migrant Cabbar-- is excluded, and understood only in the form of an irregularity.

General Amnesty was declared by the Center-Left Ecevit government. The films on the East after the 1971 ultimatum, but before 1974, took up the issues such as socio-economic underdevelopment, feudal oppression and backwardness in the region, while avoiding any political engagement. Based on Kemal Bilbasar's novel "Cemo", Atıf Yılmaz's film with the same title, *Cemo* (1972) took up a story of love interrupted by an evil bandit.²⁴²⁵ Feyzi Tuna's *Kızgın Toprak/Heated Earth* (1973) is about the struggle of a married couple in a village against the oppressive landlord who occupies the land of the couple. Orhan Elmas' *Ezo Gelin/The Bride Ezo*, (1973), the second remake of the 1958 film, is also a 'feudal' love story interrupted by a pervert land lord who uses his proves to force Ezo to marry him. Kartal Tibet's *Davaro: Son Eşkiya/Davaro: The Last Bandit* (1974) is a story of a peasant who, in order to get married, had to kill his blood enemy as part of the feudal tradition.

While these early films use tropes of Socialism and offers a –rather fleeting-- critique of feudalism, I do not consider them as part of the socialist films. One of the main criteria for a political film is the existence of agency against the feudal oppression. The Socialist discourse on Doğu is predicated on the necessity of the eradication of feudal order. In Socialist representation the feudal order is portrayed together with its

²⁴ Bandits appear in two different forms. In one form, the bandits are used by the ruling elite as a security and control mechanism against the peasant and in another form, (social) bandits emerge to counter the oppression of the ruling elite, landlords. In the chapter, bandit refers to both forms and the context will be determining to which form the concept refers.

²⁵ In the novel, the story takes place during the Kurdish Sheikh Said Rebellion and the evil bandit, Sorikoğlu, was one of the leaders of the rebellion. However, in the film version all historical references to the rebellion and the identity of Sorikoğlu is cut out from the narrative.

internal contradictions and its counter-dynamics. The aforementioned films and some others on Doğu during the 1970s fall into fatalism by fetishizing the feudal oppression without leaving any room for emancipatory social agency that would break free the oppression. The mainstream films usually excluded the socio-political address of the political films and simplified the stories within Orientalist tropes based on the ‘pornography of (feudal) violence.’²⁶

SOCIALISM, EASTERN PROBLEM AND CINEMA

The region became a major concern of the Socialist Left towards the end of the 1960s. Several writers and journalists went to the region for interviews and research. Muzaffer Erdost’s “Şemdinli Interviews” that he wrote during his military service in Semdinli district of the city of Hakkari is published in the socialist YÖN Magazin

²⁶ *Bedrana* (Süreyya Duru, 1975) is a case in point. I excluded the film for the same reason of its excessive use of feudal violence. The film is based on two stories by Socialist writer Bekir Yıldız and it’s a collective project by him, Vedat Turkali (screen writer) and Süreyya Duru (director), two socialist filmmakers. While the film is based on ethnographic research by Turkali and claim to represent the region realistically (Turkali, Eski Filmler, [198?]); it destroys its political agenda with the fatalistic melodramatic structure. Davud, the main protagonist, kidnaps Bedrana, the daughter of the landlord and take refuge in the house of the owner of the village. The village owner agrees to pay a dowry for Bedrana on behalf of Davut; in exchange, he asks Davud to smuggle his herd across the border. While Davut takes the herd to the other side of the border, the landlord’s butler kidnaps Bedrana and tries to rape her but she manages to run away even though the butler wounds her with knife. Her father sees Bedrana wounded and wants to kill her to clean his honor but the village chief stops him. The gendarmerie takes her to hospital. In the hospital Davud begs the doctor not to save Bedrana’s life because then he would have to kill her to clean his honor. Bedrana survives and goes back to her house. However, Davud has to kill her even though she told him the butler could not touch her. Davud wants to kill her but he is also afraid to go to prison. He finally finds a solution: he convinces Bedrana to fake hanging herself so that the villagers would think Bedrana is brave enough to kill herself but the god did not want to take her. When Bedrana puts the knot around her neck she realizes that Davud really wants her to hang herself, so she does... The film portrays the feudal violence but juxtapose the might of the landlord with the despair of Davud. The only positive representation is the gendarmerie who tries to mitigate the might of the landlord and restore order in the village. Not only the [feudal] violence but also illiteracy and backwardness is shown as the endemic character of the region. As was the case in social realist representation, only an outsider, the gendarmerie, would stop the vicious-circle.

between 15 July-15 November 1966; Mehmet Emin Bozarslan's book "Doğu'nun Sorunları" (The Problems of Doğu) analyzing the socio-economic situation of the region is published in the same year. Mahmut Makal's observations on "Doğu" during his exile in the region is published with the title "An Anatolia Under the Ground," in the Socialist magazine ANT in 1967. Ismail Beşikci's two-volume "Doğu Anadolu'nun Düzeni" (The Order of East Anatolia) was published in 1968 and 1969 was the first academic research on the East dealing with the structural problems of the region from a Marxian perspective. Bekir Yıldız, Osman Sahin, Orhan Kemal and Yaşar Kemal wrote stories based on their personal experiences in the region²⁷. Doğu Mitingleri (Eastern Meetings) organized within the region by the Kurdish activist groups self-identified as "Doğulular" (Easterners) was the first large scale attempt to discuss the socio-economic problems of the region after the long period of state of emergency period since the Kurdish rebellions following the foundation of the Republic (Beşikci 1992, Gündoğan 2011). Although the meetings were organized with the support of TIP, their reach well surpassed the members and organizers and attracted a wide spectrum of people from notables and land lords to merchants and to students across the region. Interregional development disparity, underdevelopment, and backwardness were comprising the conceptual arsenal of the meetings. The main solution proposed to overcome these issues was land reform (Beşikçi

²⁷ A majority of the films of the period were adapted from the stories of these writers like *Bedrana*, *Kara Çarsafli Gelin /Bride in Black Chador* (Süreyya Duru, 1975), *Firatin Cinleri/Jinns of Euphrates* (Korhan Yurtseven, 1977), *Bereketli Topraklar Uzerinde /On Fertile Grounds* (Erden Kırıl, 1979).

1992b). Land reform had already been a primary agenda of the State since the 1940s²⁸ as a way of centralizing the political and economic power by way of destroying the feudal system led by big land owners. However, in its application during the Democrat Party term (1950-1960) land reform created a ‘dependent feudalism’ as a result of assigning public lands to the landlords within the region in exchange for voting power, rather than redistributing the private lands of the land lords to the landless farmers. This systematic practice precluded socio-economic and cultural change within the region by vesting more power on the (pro-government) feudal authorities (Beşikçi, 1992).

Within the Socialist discourse ‘Eastern Problem’ (Doğu Sorunu) was used to define the aforementioned socio-political situation of the region. The discourse on Doğu within Socialism was part of a larger ‘national question’ that had been a major topic within international Marxism during the anti-colonial national struggles²⁹. Within the Socialist left, the development of Doğu was seen necessary for the development –and independence --of the Turkish nation (Zeynep, 2011). As it was reflected in the Socialist movement in Turkey, the larger discussion was centered on whether socio-economic development or national independence of the Kurds should be the primacy of the socialist movement in Turkey. Differing responses to the issue of primacy led to the persistent

²⁸ While small in scope, in 1945, 1950, and 1955, the State distributed land to landless people in the rural areas. However, later on the distributed lands were sold by the owners to the landlords. (Yıldız, 1983)

²⁹ In the late 1960s and 1970s national question is framed within the internationalist Marxist problematic of anti-colonial/anti-imperialist struggle, and socialist development. Following the debates on imperialism, underdevelopment, and the third world, the socialist Left prioritized socialist or ‘non-capitalist development’ as a way to break free from imperialist expansion. For the socialist left, Turkey was an underdeveloped nation due to its tie with the imperialist order (Belge 1993).

separation of Turkish and Kurdish socialists. The ‘Eastern Problem’ as a particular discourse was Turkish Socialism’s response to the issue of primacy; the ‘problem’ was defined through socio-economic development. According to the Socialist Left, feudalism as the main reason for the backwardness of Doğu should be eradicated as part of the ‘socialist revolution.’ Although in its radical forms the 1960s’ Socialist Left discussed the possibility of self-determination for the Kurds (Belge 1993, Yegen 2005), the modernist premises of the still strong Kemalist ideology perceiving the East within the problematic of [Turkish] national modernization dominated the Socialist agenda during the 1960s and 1970s. However, while on the discursive level Kemalism and Socialism shared a modernist and developmentalist ideology, to a great extent they differed on practical level. Unlike Kemalism, within its official incarnation, Socialism recognized the existence of Kurds. According to socialist theory, the Eastern Problem would disappear if the problem of underdevelopment would be solved. While the developmentalist ideology is problematic in itself, the problem in the socialist discourse and the socialist representation is not directly developmentalism, but how the problem of underdevelopment is framed and against whom development is offered. The underdevelopment indeed was a main problem of Doğu for the region had been subjected to emergency rules and systematically left underdeveloped.

“I am a land lord and you are money rich; when the money and power come together....it will be beneficial for the nation” tells Rashid Agha, the owner of the village, to Abuzer Bey, the local tradesman, in the film *Salako/The Fool One* (Atıf Yılmaz 1974). While the conversation out of its larger context sounds just like a business deal between the two wealthy local men, this one is of a special kind. The occasion that brings them together on that particular day is Abuzer’s intention to marry the Agha’s daughter. Both Abuzer and the Agha get very excited by the idea that with the union of two families they would be ‘unbeatable’. However, during the conversation we also learn that what unites them is not only the prospect of familial union but also the anxiety towards the recent events taking place in the village. We only learn a hint of the source of this anxiety when Abuzer complains to the Agha in that same intimate conversation: “[t]hey manipulate [the villagers]. They brought a trouble upon us called the Left. May Allah convince you, I am not able to use my left hand anymore. I would not even use my left foot if I could.” We don’t hear much about nor see the troublemakers who are manipulating the villagers but we know that they are “a bunch of educated men” who “does not recognize neither religion nor faith” and they recently visited the coffee houses in the village and that their visit is somehow related to Abuzer and Agha’s decision to bring forces together to become ‘unbeatable.’

³⁰ The title of the soundtrack of the film.

While we expect that there would be a clash between the ‘manipulated’ villagers and the Agha-Tradesman duo, the film takes us to an unlikely direction through an unlikely character: Salako-- the fool one-- or Salo as he is briefly called by his fellow villagers. Throughout the film we don’t get to know his real name, if he has one. Salo is the orphan servant of Agha. While the villagers make fun of him, for Agha he is the ideal subject “without any knowledge of (R)ight or (L)eft.” He is Agha’s punch bag and everybody in the village pities him. However, as if he did not have enough trouble in Agha’s hands already, Salako falls in love with Emine, Agha’s daughter. After learning that Agha is marrying Emine off to Abuzer, Salo decides to hang himself but he even fails to kill himself. When the villagers learn Salo’s melancholia, they convince him to kidnap Emine. However, kidnapping Emine means more than the act itself: it is the act of transgression of feudal order through interrupting the ‘deal’ between the two powers. Yet, the fact that instead of directly challenging the order, the villagers chose Salo –the most unlikely character -- to do the job through an unlikely scenario is not only the comic factor but also a clue about how reasonable it is to imagine change in that social order.

Salo is convinced by the villagers to kidnap Emine, and even though she does not feel anything for him except for pity, agrees to go with Salo as the only way to escape from the marriage with the old Abuzer and reach the notorious Bandit Hamido, her true lover. Only Salo would be ‘brave’ enough to dare to kidnap the Agha’s daughter. So the plan works. However, when Emine reaches Hamido and tells him the story, he dismisses her as he does not want to mess with Rashid Agha and Abuzer: “Without their support”

he “would die out of hunger.” Hamido locks Emine in a room until Rashid Agha and Abuzer come to pick her up. However, Salo, out of pure chance, and thanks to his clumsiness and through a series of misadventure manages to save Emine and runs away with her. After a while up in the mountain, they encounter Hamido, who is on duty robbing the villagers coming from the bank in the town. In a shoot out Emine kills Hamido, but the villagers seeing the pistol in Salo’s hand assume it was Salo who killed Hamido. They spread the word in the village that Salo killed Hamido. The conversation between the villagers, Rashid Agha and Abuzer back in the village is important to understand the effect of the event:

Villager: Congratulations Agha you trained a matchless hero...

Rashid Agha: hero?

Villager: did not you hear, it was your Salo who killed Hamido!

Villager: He saved our honor, pride and money...

Rashid Agha (surprised): Salo?

Villager: First we heard a roaring lion up on the hill...we thought it was the clap of thunder...we were wrong... and then the sound of pistol....”

Rashid Agha: Salo?

Villagers all together: Sure, Salo!

Villager: and we saw something rolling down from the hill... we saw it was Hamido... he was laying on the ground, lifeless, he fell in front of our feet... Salo was standing on top of the hill, smiling gently!

Rashid Agha (exhausted): Salo?

Villagers all together: Sure, Salo.

Villager: his grandeur.. his force...then his fiancée approached him.

Abuzer: who the heck is his fiancée?

Villager (sarcastically): It was Emine, Abuzer efendi, your fiancée!

Villager: and then we saw the sky turned into money, we thought it was a money rain!

Rashid Agha: what happened to Hamido's men?

Villager: they all died too!... and then a smell covered the air!

Abuzer: what smell?

Villager: the smell of shit, Mister Abuzer, don't you get it? under their pants!

Villagers: (laughing and chanting): Long live Salako!

Salo, unaware that he became a hero, goes down to the village to get some food.

When the villagers see Salo they receive him with fear mixed with admiration; but Salo does not understand their attitude. The villagers prepare two mules packed with food and clothes and send him back to the mountains. In his way back to the cave where he and Emine were hiding, he overhears Emine's voice from the top of the cave through a small hole talking to one of Hamido's men who is still out looking for them. She tells him she still loves Hamido, but the man tries to rape her as Hamido is dead already. Another man of Hamido comes to the cave and hits his friend with a rock to stop him. Salo accidentally falls from the top of the cave on the other man and pacifies him. Hamido's other men come into the sounds in the cave and in the dark beat each other thinking they are beating Salo. They all leave the cave thinking they are all beaten by Salo. In the meantime, Emine sees them running away from the cave and assumes Salo beat all of them to save her. When Salo comes out of the cave he dismisses Emine's attention after learning the real story and he leaves her. After he leaves, Rashid Agha and his men capture Emine and he orders his men to capture Salako. While running away from them Salako falters and accidentally falls on a colossal greyder which without any effort –even against Salo's will who tries to stop it-- starts running. The greyder on its own wards off Agha's gunned

men; then drives Salo towards Emine, Abuzer and Agha and captures them in its holder. The greyder drives them to Agha's house and stops after destroying the gate. In the next scene, we see Salo with a stick in his hand beating Rashid Agha and Abuzer's feet. Both agha and Abuzer offer to give everything but Salo would not accept, "especially Emine". At the end of the film, Emine kidnaps Salo with a rifle and they make love in a ditch.

This would have been an ideal happy ending but another ending comes afterwards. By the ditch, the narrator, turns the happy ending into –another--failed attempt at destroying the feudal order:

Who is simpleton, Salo or us? We tied our hopes to a fool guy, he turned out to be smarter than us. This stupid villagers, instead of fighting for their rights, they always depend on somebody who is the least likely. Legend of Hamido, legend of Salako... Is it going to go like this? Salako reached to his wish, we will get back to the needled barrel. Whatever!

While the film does not deal with the arrival of the Socialist Left beyond the aforementioned conversation, we know that it was a factor behind the villagers' desire to back up Salo against Rashid Agha and Abuzer. The 'historical necessity' of the withering away of feudalism in favor of a better social order, miraculously drove the trajectory of Salo. Throughout the film, it's as if Salo's actions are led, against his will, by an invisible outside force. He only accidentally saves Emine and eliminates Hamido's men. The same historical necessity mobilizes the greyder upon Rashid Agha and Abuzer. However, although aptly installed within the narrative, the 'historical necessity' is left without a

proper agency. Salo represents both the necessity and the near impossibility of social change. As narrator ruefully admits at the end of the film, Salo turns into a – bigger than himself-- legend rather than a proper historical agent initiating social change. The proper historical agent comes to the screen in the director's second comedy at the end of the decade: Feyzo, in *Kibar Feyzo/Feyzo, the Civilized One* (1978). I will get back to *Kibar Feyzo* later in the chapter after a necessary detour to the maraba films of which *Kibar Feyzo* is also one of the most sophisticated example.

MARABA, THE REVOLUTIONARY AGENT OF DOĞU

The Doğu has been mostly represented in desperate situations: with its people oppressed by the landlords, undernourished, always sickly and illiterate. Although a truthful representation of the situation in the region, it uncomfortably borders on fatalism. The socio-economic and political structure of the 'dependent feudalism' may admittedly be near-impossible to change, yet the fatalistic representation *disqualifies* any possible organic agency that would initiate a social change regardless of its consequences. In the 1960s films, the social change was introduced from outside through modernizing agents. Reflecting the military-bureaucratic consensus through the military coup in 1960, these were military officers, engineers, and teachers enrolled within the region. However, the second military coup in 1971 dismantles the optimism towards the military and any outside factor. Maraba, the agri-proletariat, became the agent of social change – and of historical progress-- in the 1970s films made by the Socialist directors. *Endişe/The Angst* (1974) by Şerif Gören is the film that introduced maraba for the first time as a fully

developed character in cinema. Although the idea had been grappled by Yılmaz Güney both in *Hudutların Kanunu/Law of the Borders* (1966) and *Umut/The Hope* (1970), neither Hıdır nor Cabbar could become ‘maraba,’ the revolutionary agent.

Endise tells the story of Cevher, who, in order to pay his blood money, goes to work at the cotton fields in the Southern city of Adana. There is an influx of workers to the cotton fields every summer due to much higher pay for the work. However, the cotton picking takes place during the hottest period of the summer and both adult and child mortality rate raises exponentially due to malaria during the picking season. Only the most despondent work force-- who can risk their life-- goes to work on the cotton fields. Hence the density of Kurdish workers ending up in the cotton fields. The film opens with the black and white photos taken by assistant director Ali Özgentürk during his field research in the cotton fields prior to the shooting of the film. The close-up pictures of the fly-ridden faces of children who are left alone on the camping area while the adults work at the field works to create an overbearing sense of destitute even before the narrative begins with the medium shot of a crying baby boy. Next, we see a number of trucks carrying the piled-up maraba to the cotton fields. We see Cevher talking to his brother-in-law about the blood money he has to collect by the end of the season. However, in the middle of the picking season the workers decide to go on a strike due to the disagreement between the workers and the patrons on the payments, a way below the national cotton ground price according to which it is calculated. The workers receive the information on cotton prices and other economic and political events from the radio which stays on

throughout the film. While the strike continues without compromise, it puts Cevher's plan to save money to pay his blood debt, and hence his life, in danger. He even agrees to marry his daughter to the landlord in exchange for a good amount of money but it does not happen as the daughter runs away with somebody else. At the end of the season, Cevher fails to collect and pay the money and his blood enemies kills him in the cotton fields.

Endişe, while holds on to a class-based perspective through the antagonism between the landlord, patrons and the workers, points to another antagonism, that is between the workers and Cevher ³¹. The film end up being the critique of Cevher as maraba, or his failure of being one. He is portrayed as lacking class consciousness and sense of solidarity with the other workers due to his attachment to the feudal order through blood feud. His impending feudal predicament is recognized as the main reason for Cevher's opportunistic attitude throughout the strike: his willingness to break the strike, while puts him in bad terms with the workers, makes him a sympathetic worker in

³¹ Yılmaz Güney was the original director of *Endişe*, however, Güney's assistant Şerif Gören completed the film after Güney was imprisoned with charges of murdering the district prosecutor. The film is initially planned as a documentary account of cotton workers who migrate to the cotton fields in Adana every year for the entire summer and work under extreme conditions. The scenario is based on the three-month ethnographic research done by the assistant director Ali Özgentürk upon Yılmaz Güney's request. By realistically representing the working conditions of the cotton workers, Güney aims to contribute to the intensifying workers' struggle of the period (Güney 2005). However, under Goren's direction the film's focus changes from the workers' collective struggle to personal struggle of the main character Cevher. Despite this dramatic shift in the narrative, the documentary style remains as an important aspect of the film. In order to sustain the documentary atmosphere, Goren successfully integrates worker's mundane activities --- fasting, praying, eating, playing, etc --- to the narrative structure though a steady-cam wandering amongst the workers' tents. *Endişe* received the 'best actor', 'the best original scenario', and 'the best film' awards in that year's highly controversial Antalya Film Festival, where a group of unsatisfied audience stoned the jury for their decision. (Yedinci Sanat 1975)

the eyes of the patrons. He cannot join the other marabas' celebrations during the strike. Moreover, he is openly favored by the patrons with promotions as long as he continues to work. The film's message is in parallel with the socialist discourse of the period, explicating how feudal structure and the traditional loyalties ingrained in that structure run counter to a socialist revolution: a successful revolution passes through the abolition of feudalism and the failure is not less than death.

The narrative of *Kara Carsafli Gelin/Bride With Black Chador* (Süreyya Duru 1975) also builds upon a blood feud. The landlord of the village orders a villager to kill a fellow villager in exchange for economic support for his family. After the villager completes the mission he asks the landlord why he killed the guy. The landlord tells him not to question his orders. We later learn that the landlord wanted to possess the victim's land that the victim was not willing to give up to the landlord. Blood provokes blood and the victim's family is supposed to reciprocate in equal measure. However, instead, the victim's family asks for the daughter of the murderer in exchange for the life of the victim to prevent the blood feud and the family of the murderer accepts. Years later, we see the older sons of the victim, Müslüm—who carries a rifle throughout the film -- propagating land reform in the village. Yet the landlord opposes him and threatens the villagers if they follow his lead. When Müslüm is supported by the idealist engineer in helping the villagers to defend their rights, the village landlord asks the help of the big landlord of the region. The 'big boss' apparently has close ties with the government and uses this connection in local affairs. The big landlord together with a Minister of the

Parliament visits the village to both scare and sweet talk to the villagers. However, led by Müslüm, the villagers tell them they only want land reform. Müslüm is found too dangerous for the villagers and the landlord of the village orders another villager to kill Müslüm, again, in exchange for support for his family. The villager kills Müslüm during his brother Vakkas' wedding. The villagers force Vakkas to take revenge to save his honor but he believes that there is somebody else behind the shooting, in the same way that he believed there was somebody behind the death of his father. Vakkas finds an ingenious trick to learn who is behind the shooting. During Müslüm's funeral, Vakkas kindly asks the murderer to go into the grave and measure it to make sure Müslüm fits into it. Assuming that nobody saw him shooting Müslüm, the murderer hops into the grave unsuspectingly. Vakkas points his pistol to him and asks him who made him kill Müslüm. The murderer gives the name of the landlord. At the end Vakkas kills the landlord to avenge both deaths.

In *Fıratın Cinleri/Jinns of the Euphrates* (Korhan Yurtsever 1977), the landlord of the village, Vakkas Agha, seizes the land of Genco on the premise that the river Euphrates eroded most of Genco's land and the remaining part merged with his land. However, Genco finds the explanation unfair and refuses to give up on his land. Vakkas Agha orders his men to beat Genco for his irreverence. In a flashback, we learn Vakkas Agha wanted to stop Genco's wedding for he wanted to have the bride, Yağda. But he could not insist as Yağda's uncle, the notorious Bandit Kasım, the only person Vakkas is afraid of, backs up Genco. While Genco gets beaten up badly, his defiance is spread in

the village. Genco's mother tells him to go to the court, assuming that "the law would treat Genco and Vakkas equally" but the elder of the village tries to convince them that Vakkas Agha is the representative of God on the earth and he should be treated respectfully: the way of the government would solve any problem.

Agha also intervenes when Genco wants to bring a doctor for Yağda.³² Genco's friend Zülfü insists they bring a doctor but neither the elder nor Vakkas fancies the idea. Vakkas tells Genco they have Sheiks and hodjas who can heal Yağda with the force of their breath. According to the elder Yağda is under the influence of Jinns and the only solution is a jinn-expellers. Agha promises he would bring the best jinn-expeller. Not convinced but having no other option, Genco agrees to stay in the village.³³ However, the jinn-expeller cannot heal her because "she is under the influence of water jinns who are the worst and the strongest kind." Yağda goes completely insane during the jinn-expelling ritual. Zülfü summons the fellow villagers:

If doctor was here, he would have healed our sister. But the bastard landlord did not want it. So far we lived like dogs. Who sweats all the time, if not us? We did the sowing and harvesting, look what we have, nothing! Will it continue like this?

³² Yağda has difficulty during the delivery of her second child. We see the midwife and two more women helping Yağda to deliver the baby. In a series of shots we see the process: first they hang Yağda from her hands and shake her up and down, then they lay her on the floor and press down a flat wooden piece with their feet; then bounce her to the ground. The delivery happens but the mother cannot stop the bleeding. Midwife recommends her to put dung to her wound to stop the bleeding. However, Yağda gets rabid decease from the dung.

³³ In a conversation between Agha and his butler we learn Agha's real concern: "Genco is giving ideas to the villagers [...] So if Genco brings the government into everything, he becomes an example for the villagers, and our credit in front of the village devalues. And whoever feels damaged by the feudal tradition starts asking for rights and justice."

No, brothers, it's enough. Let's wake up! Let's do not let the landlord to seize the bearing of our sweat.

While Zülfü and the villagers march towards Vakkas Agha with hammers and shovels, Genco reaches to the Agha and kills him.

*KIBAR FEYZO*³⁴ AND SOCIALIST REVOLUTION IN DOĞU

The film starts in the courtroom. Feyzo is summoned by the judge for defense and he tells how he ended up in the court: “My name is Feyzo, they call me ‘Feyzo, the civilized one,’ in the village. This life did not leave us any heart or soul. However we know who is to blame. Poverty is the main reason, your honor, we realized this too late.” After this brief introduction the film goes back to the beginning as Feyzo narrates the story. After the military service Feyzo comes back to his village to marry his long time beloved Gülo. However, as Gülo’s father raises the dowry Feyzo pays its half with bond under the land lord, Maho Agha’s guarantee. During the wedding ceremony Maho Agha expels him from the village for his ‘irreverence’ because according to Agha, Feyzo disrupted the dress code by wearing a hat that ‘could only be worn by Aghas.’ Feyzo goes to Istanbul to work and earn the money he owes to his father-in-law. While in the city he sees the labor market, which he thinks “worse than the animal market in the

³⁴ The direct translation of the title would be Feyzo, The Polite One. Throughout the film we are not told how he acquired the name but it's made clear that his exposure to the ‘civilized’ life in the cities he is exiled and his desire to bring it in his village is the reason for the name. However, what inspires Feyzo is not the city life itself which is also criticized by him, but the political vibrancy of the workers against the oppression and inequality ingrained in the urban life. In the translation, I chose ‘civilized’ instead of polite to give this sense of acculturation and enlightenment.

village.” After six months he learns Maho Agha forgives him and he can go back to the village. When he goes back, his father-in-law asks for the first installment of his debt. In order to complete the amount, he decides to construct a makeshift public restroom that he saw in the city. When Agha learns about it he comes to see the restroom. Even though Feyzo tells Maho Agha that ‘it’s free for him to use it,’ Maho Agha gets offended by the idea that a maraba would take shit after him. He one more time expels Feyzo from the village. Second time in Istanbul, he works as a construction worker and he hears about labor unions. Even though he does not know what it means he learns “if you are from labor union you get more money and you become stronger.” After a while Maho Agha calls him back to the village to pay his debt. Being unable to pay the second installment Feyzo sells his mother’s cow. When his mother learns it she puts him on the plough instead of the cow to process the field. The government representative visiting the village sees Feyzo under the plough and asks Maho Agha for explanation. The conversation between Feyzo, Maho Agha and the representative summarizes the main stake of the film:

Feyzo: Welcome, my Agha

Agha: Feyzo, what is this, you put yourself there as if you are a cow?

Feyzo: Yes. Haci Huso (the father-in-law) took the cow, Maho Agha.

Representative: Why did he take it?

Feyzo: As an installment of the dowry, Sir.

Rep: [to Maho Agha] Did not you tell me you are paying the dowries for the villagers? [to Feyzo] Do you have land?

Feyzo: how can maraba have land, sir? We are farming Maho Agha’s land

Rep: How much money do you make annually?

Feyzo: What money? our Agha just feeds us

Rep: Is it really enough?

Feyzo: May god protect the Agha. If we are able to eat a piece of bread, it's thanks to the the Agha.

Maho Agha blames his butler for not telling him what really goes on in the village and in front of the representative promises Feyzo land and two cows in addition to the money for the dowry. After the representative leaves, though, Maho Agha beats Feyzo and expels him from the village for the third time. The third time in the city he witnesses a workers' strike. Feyzo narrates what he saw to the Judge: "There are city Aghas in the city. But here, if marabas don't get what they deserve, they gather hand to hand for their rights." and he reads the banners he sees during the strike: "Strike," "Bread," "Freedom," "Workers Brothers, Bosses Treators," "Fascism..." "What the heck is Fascism?" Feyzo asks the Judge if he knows what "Fasho" means and he continues without waiting the answer: "I swear to God, our Agha is Fasho!"

Feyzo starts working as painter to erase graffiti on the walls written by the revolutionaries. He also learns them by heart: "End to the order of Aghas!," "No passage to Fascism!," "Revolutionary Youth: General Strike is our right. We will get it no matter what!," "Fascist cells must be destroyed!" Feyzo also learns the lesson of his life: while on the street he sees a wedding ceremony and he wants to talk to the groom:

Feyzo: How much did you pay, bro?

Groom: For what?

Feyzo: For the woman?

Groom: What are you talking about, man; who says you can buy women?

Bride's Father: Leave us alone, mister!

Feyzo: I am asking him how much he paid for the bride.

Father: I am the father of the bride. My daughter is not for sale. They met and got married.

Feyzo: Did not you ask for dowry for your daughter?

Father: What dowry, son, there is no such a tradition any more.

Feyzo: (to the groom) tell me the truth for god's sake, you got the bride for free?

Groom: (laughing) yes it's for free.

After he comes back to the village he spreads the words to the villagers and gather them at the village center to protest dowry. Their banners read "Girls should get the husband, Pay the money to the cow," "Women are our right, until we get them we will fight," "We are women we are mother, we are against to be sold." Even though Maho Agha suppresses the protest violently, the villagers overcome their fear of the Agha. Feyzo's mother even threatens Maho: "Beat as long as you can, won't that stick end up in our hands one day?" This time Agha does not let Feyzo leave the village, because every time he leaves the village, 'he creates a bigger problem' for him. On the other hand, while content that he would not leave his family, Feyzo tries to find a way to go to the city to earn money to pay the next installment. He does all the tricks to get himself expelled; he even writes graffiti on the wall in the village. Maho Agha sees him writing "Fasho Agha." When Agha asks its meaning, Feyzo explains: "It means like bastard and faggot, my Agha." But Agha still does not expel him fearing the consequences.

While in the village Feyzo learns that the cotton workers in Adana earns a lot of money. He talks to the other marabas and they all go to talk to Maho Agha. But Maho Agha does not give them permission to leave the village. He blames Feyzo to have spread these “evil ideas” among the marabas. However, other marabas also oppose Maho Agha’s decision. Recalling the general strike in the city, Feyzo gathers the marabas around him and convinces them to come with him to the cotton fields. The entire village packs their stuff and set out to go to cotton fields but Maho Agha stops the caravans and threatens the villagers. At the end, Feyzo shoots Maho Agha dead. Back in the courtroom, we learn that, Maho Agha’s death was not the end of oppression at all. A new landlord bought the village and he is even worse than Maho Agha. The film ends with Feyzo’s question to the Judge: I don’t know where this ends up, your honor. You are the state, and you are aware. You make the decision, your highness, Who is to blame?

While the death of Maho Agha allows Feyzo to talk to the state directly for the first time as a proper ‘subject’, the direct encounter is problematized by its terms. It expresses the desire to talk to the Power, whose understanding was sought for the problems of the region, the encounter is also structured in a position of inequality and guilt. Feyzo gets to speak to the state while, except for calling Feyzo’s name at the beginning, the State remains silent throughout the film. However, Feyzo speaks as a criminal. Indeed, this was one of the Socialist critiques of the state that it categorically conceived of the “easterners” as criminals. The films ends without the verdict. As a matter of fact, the verdict of the judge is not considered important, as we already know

that Feyzo will be incarcerated for his violent deed. Moreover, he already reveals the important verdict in his last address to the Judge when he tells him that another Agha bought the village and he is even worse than Maho Agha. As his ‘revolution’ ended up bringing about a more oppressive order, Feyzo learns that the problem cannot solely be solved where it is lived.

In all these films, the ‘revolutionary’ agency of maraba both saves the narrative from an otherwise orientaling logic and complicates the realist premises of the films. Maraba is represented as a classed body whose actions are solely motivated by economic destitute. In order to emphasize the socio-economic factor, the narrative excludes what, during that period, haunts the Socialists as well as liberals and what was labeled as “Kürtçülük,” ‘Kurdism.’ Kurdism was used to define Kurdish population sympathetic to Barzani movement in northern Iraq and who strived for independent Kurdistan. Maraba, while given revolutionary agency vis-à-vis the feudal order, should also be read as a response to the danger of Kurdism. Maraba as Socialist national fantasy works to nationalize the very revolutionary agency³⁵.

SÜRÜ/THE HERD AND HAZAL: DOĞU’S ENCOUNTER WITH NATIONAL MODERNITY

Sürü (1977) and *Hazal* (1979) mark an important shift within the cinematic representation of Doğu in the 1970s socialist cinema. While the other films discussed so far have dealt with Doğu as outside national modernity, and informed by the desire for

³⁵ The discourse of Kurdism is a good example of how anti-imperialist ideology can reproduce nationalism. Kurdism was seen as foreign-inspired ideology that was designed to disintegrate the national unity as in the case of Ismail Cem’s reflections of the ‘general scan at the beginning of the decade. (see Cem 1970)

modernization, *Sürü* and *Hazal* deal with the region's physical encounter with national modernization through various modern technologies. Both films also differ from the others in terms of their main characters. Maraba is no longer a main character in these films. *Sürü* was written and supervised by Yılmaz Güney while he was in prison after allegedly murdering the district prosecutor during the filming of *Endişe* in 1974. During this period – the late 1970s-- Güney's politics as well as cinematic focus on the region shifted from the workers' struggle to the Kurdish question (Sengül 2012). After films such as *Umut* (1970), *Ağıt* (1971), and *Endişe* (1974), in which socialist politics informed the narrative -- even though the messages always carried references to ethnicity—*Sürü* does not revolve around a strictly socialist problematic. This shift is also seen in Güney's choice of subject matter for the film.

The film deals with the disintegration of an animal-breeding, nomadic Kurdish tribe in the face of the arrival of modern agriculture into the region, which has eradicated the pasturelands. The Veysikan tribe, headed by Hamo Agha, is already dysfunctional after losing its men to a blood feud with the Halilhan tribe, which ended when the latter agreed to marry a female member to Hamo's son Şivan in exchange for the life of another tribe member. At the very beginning of the film, the worried face of Hamo watches the tractors enter the scene. As a yearly routine, Hamo has a deal with a businessman from Ankara to sell a portion of the herd. Already troubled by the tractors, Hamo's train journey to Ankara with the herd completes the process of disintegration. In order to rent the compartments of the train, Hamo has to bribe the officers and the machinists, who,

finding the bribe too little, cause the death of a number of animals by driving the train haphazardly. The officer does not even clean up the compartments that had residues of DDT from the earlier trip, which killed more animals throughout the journey. The railway, through its corrupt bureaucracy, and with its claustrophobic compartments, works as a metaphor for the terms of the region's integration into the national modernity (and national market). When Hamo and his sons arrive in Ankara, the businessman tells them to feed the herd in the animal bazaar for a couple of days before he buys them. At the end of the film Hamo is shown alone in a crowded urban milieu screaming the names of his sons he lost in the city. Yet, the film is not totally devoid of socialist politics. It is only in the city of Ankara that Güney brings up the necessity of socialist revolution within the urban proletariat through Şivan's childhood friend who is a construction worker in the city. Back where the films open, in the East, Güney does not refer to socialist revolution as solution of the problems of the nomadic Kurdish tribe. Güney seems to exclude Doğu from the geography of socialist revolution, by instead problematizing the process of modernization as incorporation –more specifically exploitation-- into the national market.

Hazal by Ali Özgentürk, a former assistant to Güney, takes place in a border village in the East. The film depicts the response of the feudal elite to the construction of roads connecting the village to the rest of the national territory. Although they initially resist the road construction, the film provides a rare portrayal of feudal elites as *rational* agents of a politic-economic system, without ridiculing them or showing them as evil.

During a meeting to discuss the possible repercussions of the construction, the landlord warns the village committee against the dangers of roads: “When the road comes, the state comes too. The state records your name, gives you an ID, gets to know about you, and intervenes in everything you do.” Unlike the majority of “revolutionary” films depicting the feudal order at its apex, *Hazal*, depicts the disintegration of the feudal system during the process of modernization. After the meeting, the committee decides to oppose the construction and punish the villagers willing to cooperate with the engineers. The tension arises when an idealist villager convinces the other villagers to work with the engineers. Although the landlord manages to kill the idealist villager, he cannot stop the arrival of the excavators into the village. The visual representation of this process is remarkable: as the machines progress towards the village, carving the ground for the road, the villagers run away and gather around the corpse of the idealist villager. The tremendous heft of the machines contrasts with the human forms, which seem like ants from a bird’s eye view. While *Hazal* has a more balanced representation of everyday life in the village, due, perhaps, to the director’s earlier documentary works on the region and his collaborations with Güney, the narrative is still structured around the feudal-modern tension. It is also notable that, although made at the very end of the 1970s, socialism does not factor into the narrative; rather, the modernists’ desire remains intact. To some extent, the film takes ‘the agency’ that was granted to maraba away, from within the region to the outside technocrat modernizers of the state.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF DOĞU IN POST-1980 TURKISH CINEMA

The 1980s marks the end of Doğu as a cinematic space in Turkish cinema. This is not the literal disappearance of the region from the cinema. Rather, the disappearance of ‘Doğu’ as formulized within Socialist discourse and portrayed in cinema of the 1970s: the marabas exploited by the landlords, the scorching summer time of harvesting on the fields, evil landlords, backwardness, and blood feud claiming the lives of the people, etc.. The film *Hakkari’de bir Mevsim/A Season in Hakkari* (Erden Kıral 1983), is about a primary school teacher who in the middle of winter ends up in the Pirkanis village of the city of Hakkari ³⁶. The teacher does not even remember how he came to the village: he may be “lost, a survivor or a fugitive.” Unlike the state representatives who came to the region in the earlier films, he is not there to represent the state, he is sent here by the state as punishment. Not only does he have not any control over the village, he is not able to communicate neither with the people nor with his own students who is speaking “another language.” The teacher stays in the village for a semester and when he finally starts communicating with the people and the students, an inspector from the Ministry comes and tells him that his term in the village is over. The film gives a critique of the state policies not through the ‘poverty’ of the region but the through the teacher who sees in the village another world which is foreign to him. The teacher, rather than being the

³⁶ The city of Hakkari was a primary direction of exile for socialist teachers. It’s the farthest city from the national capital. The idea of sending the teachers to Hakkari was to pacify them as a teacher and dissenter. The teacher would struggle with language barrier, lack of infrastructure, and sense of isolation both physically and intellectually as the city becomes unreachable during the long winter season due to the snow.

modernizer -- like the one in *Hudutların Kanunu* -- tries to learn from the villagers survival skills to simply stay alive. While his amnesia lets him to see the region from a fresh perspective, unmediated by modernist ideology, it also refers to a violent traumatic moment as the cause of the amnesia.

Derman/Remedy (Şerif Gören 1983) is about a nurse who is appointed to work in Doğu. She has to stop by a village on the way as the roads are blocked by the snow. While in the village she helps the villagers with their health. But when she decides to take a pregnant woman to the hospital despite the warnings of the villagers, she barely survives the snow. In the meantime, she is called by the neighboring village. Even though the villagers she stays with warn her not to go, she decides to go anyways since 'it's her job to help everybody.' But when she goes to the neighboring village the village chief does not allow her to return. She is saved by the bandit Şeyhmus who is feared and respected by everybody. Şeyhmus is a fugitive. After killing somebody he took shelter in the mountains. Since then he helps people in need. Şeyhmus falls in love with the nurse. But the nurse wants him to surrender and he surrenders.

Züğürt Ağa is the story on a landlord who has long lost his power to rule his land and his subjects. Except for wrestling, the landlord does not have any venue to show his might! He always wins the matches. However, the wrestling are set up by the villagers. The opponents are bought to lose to the Ağa, so that after every victory he offers feast to the villagers. His party loses elections to the party of the Sheikh who gave the villagers land title in the heaven. Unlike the films of the 1970s where the narrative is centered on

the antagonism between the feudal ruling class (Agha, Sheikh) and the peasant, in *Züğürt Agha* both the Agha and the peasant are losers. A larger force destroys the feudal dynamics but the result is not what the Socialist were prophesying. After an unproductive harvesting season and as a result of the villagers' decision to sell his share of crop, the landlord has to sell the village. The potential buyer is the head of "his party." After Agha sells the village and moves to the city, he learns that the value of the village area has drastically increased due to the highway project passing through the village.

In *Yer Demir, Gök Bakır/Iron Earth, Copper Sky* (Zülfü Livaneli 1987) The inhabitants of a mountain village are scared by the village chief that the landlord, Adil Efendi (Mister Just), is coming to the village accompanied by 20 gendarmerie and if they don't pay their debts, he will raze down the village. While Taşbaş and a few others tell the other villagers to resist, the villagers, instead, find a safer solution. They start believing that Taşbaş, their fellow villager is a Saint who can save them from the might of the land lord. The rumors spread very quickly and even the village chief has to go with the flow. Tasbas strictly refuses the idea at first but he has to accept to it as his refusal also is seen by the villagers as a sign of his being a genuine saint: "only a genuine one would refuse he is not saint" While the 'invention' works to scare the village chief off from messing with Tasbas and the villagers, when the head of the gendarmerie hears the story he goes to the village and arrest Tasbas as the sign of "dark age" mentality.

Throughout the film, Adil Efendi does not appear, even whether he really is coming or not is not certain. At the end of the film, while Taşbaş is arrested by the

gendarmerie, he speaks to the villager that he is cursing the village chief and nobody should talk to him until his death. *Katırcılar/Mule Riders* (Şerif Gören 1987) is about a female journalist visiting a town on the Iranian border to write a story on smuggling. In the town, she meets three mule riders who smuggle food across the border. The mule riders get caught by the gendarmerie and they are sent to the court in the village. On the road, the journalist accompanies the gendarmerie and the mule riders and we learn the stories of all on the road. The mule riders are the only ones who know the directions in the snow and they had to lead the crew to the court. The mule riders manage to escape after saving the lives of the gendarmes and the journalist after the avalanche.

The first thing to notice in the films of 1980s is the dramatic change of the season. Winter and snow capped mountains dominated the films on the region. In the only film that insisted staying in Doğu, *Züğürt Ağa/Penniless Ağa* (1985), the marabas force the Ağa to sell the village. As the title suggests, the landlord is very different from that of 1970s. Within the first half of the movie, the landlord had to move to the city where he ends up running a food vendor. With the disappearance of the land under the snow, marabas disappeared too, so did the evil landlords, and the malaria. Their disappearance only paralleled the disappearance of the Socialist movement after the coup. The snow was either a memory loss by the trauma of the coup or to ‘freeze’ the problems for better times. It signified the end of an era, revolution left its place to weariness. The 1980 coup made impossible the re-emergence of Left leaning parties due to mass incarcerations and the new constitution severely limiting basic rights and freedoms. The

military rule lasted until 1983 when the center-Right Motherland Party won the general elections. The Kurdish movement, as a result of extreme state-violence, evolved into a Marxist-Leninist guerilla movement under the name Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) which started its armed resistance in Turkey in 1984. Due to both the military coup and the emergence of the Kurdish armed struggle by PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) making films within and on *Doğu* became virtually impossible.

CONCLUSION

The films of Doğu captured an important moment in the history of politics of dissent in Turkey. Turkish Socialists and the Kurdish opposition, underground since late 1930 united their powers for a decade. While the Turkish Socialists took the ‘Eastern problem’ as a major component of their politics and for the first time opened the region to critical knowledge production, the Socialist revival in the East, thanks to the socialist movements in Turkey and in Iraq provided a model for a Socialist revolution for the Turkish Socialism. A new subject position, maraba, became the main protagonist of the majority of the films on Doğu. Maraba represents the revolutionary consciousness of the rural working class in the region and through his agency the villagers formed a block against the feudal ruling class. Even though in none of the afore mentioned films the uprising led to a systemic change, the flexibility of the system is shown through the encounters between marabas and the ruling elite. However, the failure of the marabas in the films is not just due to the strengths of the feudal ruling elites. As it emerged in the Socialist discourse, what produced maraba was the ‘hopelessness,’ which haunted the

very agency that is given to him. Even though maraba stood in for the Kurdish peasant in the 1960s and 1970s, its representation in cinema stripped them of their ethnic ‘excess,’ by overemphasizing their socio-economic bases. The actions of the de-ethnicized figure of maraba are driven only by his economic destitute.³⁷

The socialist films were able to deal with social problems during a time when, as writer Vedat Türkali aptly described, ‘the price of a line of writing was one’s head’ (Türkali 1993, 87). The directors, screenwriters, producers were subjected to systematic incarceration, torture, and exile. The screenwriters had to use different names on their scripts to pass the censorship³⁸. The films were trashed and the theaters where these films were exhibited were burned down by ultra-nationalists mobilized by the conservative governments. In the meanwhile, the 1977 statute on cinematic materials made any hint of criticism an act of terrorism (Türkali 1993). The articles in the 1977 statute were all interpretative, according to which every film can be deemed subversive (Özgüç et. al. 2000). The systematic violence the filmmakers faced during 1970s should be an indication of the radical character of their films. Despite all state violence, the socialist cinema produced influential films.

³⁷ The ethnic content of the mobilities within the region in the 1960s and 1970s were framed as separatist ‘Kurdism’ against which the state was invited to fight through socio-economic development programs (Cem, 1970). However, this does not cancel out that the Socialist films of the 1970s also pushed the limits of the representation of the region in Turkish cinema

³⁸ Nazim Hikmet, Vedat Türkali, and Yasar Kemal were well-known examples of the socialist writers, who had to use different names to write for films. As discussed in the previous chapter, in Turkey censorship in cinema functioned at three levels: on the script (pre-production), the film, and the exhibition (post-production). In order for a film to be shot, its script had to pass the censorship. This mechanism made the name on the script of prime importance for the censor committee.

While the East was made visible through these films, it gained this visibility through the gaze of socialist modernization: Doğu was the spatial form through which the East came to be seen within the decade's films. 1980 is a turning point in the representation of the region. Although the post-coup constitution prepared by the military rendered any engagement with the region as crime, the films of the decade, while being more cautious in terms of their political message, are also less certain in terms of perceiving the region. The revolutionary certainty of the Socialist directors during the 1970s that feudalism is the prime problem of the region and what was needed was a socio-economic development left its place to the weariness of the main characters ended up in the region. The weariness can be attributed to the trauma of the coup and the disappearance of Socialist movement, but this also led the directors see the region outside the Socialist framework: poverty and feudalism. The characters in the aforementioned films observe the region and the people inside and see a different life that is different but not necessarily worse than theirs: The teacher in *HBM* is an exile in a place he does not know anything about, the journalist in *Katircilar* is abused by the public officials during his time in the town. In *Derman*, the midwife is rescued by the villagers just before freezing in the snow storm.

CHAPTER IV: THE LONG 1990s: WAR, DOĞU AND THE POLITICS OF SPACE IN NEW TURKISH CINEMA

INTRODUCTION: THE LONG 1990S

The war has marked the condition, possibility and the language of cinema on Doğu³⁹ during the 1990s. The armed conflict that started in 1984 and turned into a civil war in the early 1990s left by the end of the decade approximately four thousand villages and hamlets evacuated (Jongerden 2007, Secor 2007, Ungör 2011, Mater 2005, Ronayne 2005) forcing about three million inhabitants to leave their homes in the region. The establishment of the emergency rule zone in the region through the State of Emergency put in effect in 1987 – following the martial law since 1979-- not only turned the region into a dead zone, but it also defined the life of the inhabitants in their new places. The evacuated villages flooded with water of the dams constructed as part of the state's regional development program, military towers and barracks and ghostly houses populated the cinematic space of what I will call, regarding the time of the films, “the long 1990s.” I use the ‘long 1990s’ to refer to the period during which the war defined the cultural production on the region. In this chapter, I discuss how the war affected the representation of Doğu in the cinema of the 1990s: what kind of a space did Doğu

³⁹ Though the discursive function of ‘Doğu’ continue to determine the mode of official engagement, in 1990s, ‘southeast’ (güneydoğu), abbreviation for the ‘Güneydoğu Anadolu Bölgesi’ (Southeastern Anatolia Region), came to be used to refer to the main space of state involvement. There are two reasons for the shift in naming: firstly due to the Southeastern Regional Development (GAP) plan which was the quintessential part of the post-coup military governments’ spatial policy in the region in the 1980s, which defined the southeast as the primary reference for the official and the scholarly address. Secondly, southeast has been the epicenter of the armed conflict between the PKK and the Army.

become in the films of the decade? The spatial reading will combine on the one hand the textual analysis of the films dealing with the war, on the other how the war and the state of emergency affected the politics of cinematic production. I am interested in the transformation of the cinematic space of Doğu from a socialist spatiality to the space of war.

The cinematic production in the 1990s was shaped by multiple factors both inside and outside of cinema. Within cinema, the 1990s witnessed the revival of the cinematic production after being almost stagnant throughout the post-coup 1980s. Defined as “New Turkish Cinema” (Dönmez-Colin 2008, Suner 2011), this ‘new wave’ is identified by its engagement in the issues of identity, belonging and memory as main concerns behind the productions. The films on the region were a part of this cinematic language new Turkish cinema appropriated.⁴⁰ This was made possible –and necessitated by --the political conjuncture in the 1990s. While the State of Emergency rule limited the scope of cultural production in/on the region,⁴¹ the first Gulf War and the diplomatic traffic between Kurdish, Turkish and the American representatives on the future of the post-war Iraq, the new coalition government in Turkey that brought together the left and the right first time after the 1980 coup, the recognition (by the president and the prime minister) of “Kurdish reality” in the early 1991 led to the production of films about “Kurds.” *Mem û*

⁴⁰ As a gesture against subtle nationalism within the literature, many scholars address the possible ‘nationalist’ connotation of “Turkish,” in “Turkish cinema” and promote using “Cinema of Turkey”, instead of Turkish cinema. See Arslan 2011, Suner 2001, Donmez-Colin 2008.

⁴¹ Decree-Law no 430: 12/15/1990. On the Continuation of State of Emergency and the necessary Precautions that should be taken by the State of Emergency Governorate.
<http://www.mevzuat.adaleet.gov.tr/html/10042.html> (date of access: 7/24/12)

Zin/Mem and Zin (Ümit Elçi 1991) and *Siyabend û Xece /Siyabend and Xece* (Şahin Gök 1992), both based on Kurdish epics, were the early demonstrations of the short-lived change of political atmosphere. Yet the successive failures of the governments' reform plans and of the unilateral cease-fires declared by the PKK led to the intensification of the armed conflict between the Turkish army and the PKK towards the middle of the decade. What was equally alarming during the decade was the possibility of total state of war including the urban centers receiving Kurdish migrants from the depopulated war zone, heralded by the public lynchings against the newcomers (Kılıç 1992, Belge 1995).

Cinema, while an important medium through which the region has become visible during the 1990s, was not the only one. Television, due to its ease of access and its importance as governmental propaganda machine became the most important, and affective, distributor of structure of vision on the war throughout the decade. A special weekly program 'Sights From Anatolia' was dedicated to the war efforts of the Turkish Army and to the issue of 'PKK terror' The public channel, TRT2 (Turkish Radio Television), started broadcasting in 1987,dedicated most of its air time to the educational programs on Southeast Anatolia Regional Development Project (GAP) propagating the state efforts in the region. Yet, while the medium of television ---especially the public television-- was representing the state perspective on the issue, cinema was able to critically reflect on the process. The reason behind the 'ideological' difference between the (public) television and cinema is the institutional structure of the former. Whereas television, until the early 1990s when private channels started broadcasting, was directly

run by the successive governments and considered as the key institution for political and ideological propaganda, cinema enjoyed, at least, institutional autonomy. Although the 1990s witnessed the emergence of private channels, a government institution, The Radio and Television Supreme Council, strictly regulated the televisual content.⁴² Despite the fact that private televisions broke the taboos of public broadcasting to an important extent the Supreme Council is effective in securing the ‘state perspective’ on several issues of public concern.

The war informed the cinematic language in two ways: the urban migration and the concomitant anxiety over the new population and the raising ethnic conflict in the western cities necessitated the film directors reflect of the ‘urban’ side of the Kurdish question, which was in a way a turning point after the dominance of the village as the main space of the representation of Doğu. Secondly, while the main space of cinematic representation changed, the films, in a dialectical movement, constantly oscillated between the western city and the southeast to connect the two spatio-temporalities insulated by the mainstream media. I will discuss the ways in which Turkish cinema engaged in the representation of the war and its effects through two sites. While the region has become the site of the armed conflict, its effects far exceeded the region due to the depopulation of the region and the migration to the cities within and outside the region, to fight the PKK and disconnect the Turkish Kurds from the Kurds in the post-

⁴² The Supreme Council was set up with the Article 3984 in 1994 and replaced The Radio and Television High Council that had been in effect since 1983. In addition to the duties of High Council, the Supreme Council assert jurisdiction over the new private channels.

Gulf War Iraq (Belge 1995). The beginning of the 1990s witnessed several economic-turned-ethnic violence between the migrant Kurdish population and the inhabitants and in several cases the migrant population were expelled by the inhabitants after violent encounters (Kılıç 1992, Belge 1995). The first trope is based on a particular spatial configuration: ‘*empty village under water*’ as the product of the forced migration from the region throughout the state of emergency period. In this part, I will analyze *Eşkiya/The Bandit* (Yavuz Turgul 1996), *Işıklar Sönmesin/Let There Be Light* (Reis Çelik 1996), *Güneşe Yolculuk/Journey to the Sun* (Yeşim Ustaoglu 1999), and *Büyük Adam, Küçük Aşk/Old Man, Little Love* (Handan Ipekçi 2000). I will suggest that the dialectical spatial orders of these films create a rupture in the official discourse taking migration and the spatial strategies of the army as distinct and unrelated phenomena. The second one is the trope of ‘*going back to doğu.*’ They are motivated by the desire to ‘claim’ the region into the nation-space. In *Büyük Spell* (Orhan Oğuz 2004) and *Deli Yürek: Bumerang Cehennemi/Crazy at Heart: The Hell of Bumerang* (Osman Sınav 2001) the main protagonist(s) go back to the ‘southeast’ to solve a mystery of national importance. *Vizontele* (Yılmaz Erdoğan & Omer Faruk Sorak 2001) is about the arrival of Television to a remote town of Doğu in 1974 during the Cyprus Incursion. While the narrative time of the film is the mid-1970s, I will claim the allegorical connection of the two wars is strategic to understand the message of the film. Though the ‘new wave’ cinema has a critical stance on the Kurdish question and the new stage it reached with the beginning of the armed conflict, the intensity with which the films engage in the issue greatly varies

from one film to another. While the films like *Eskiya* and *Vizontele* are big budget films and aimed at national audience and conveyed their engagement through commercially successful formulas thus avoiding overtly political messages, other films directly engaged in a political critique without market concern. It's not surprising, however, that the only film in this chapter having an openly nationalist tone *Deli Yürek: Bumerang Cehennem* is the film adaptation of a highly successful nationalist TV serial that had been on for several years. The difference in the ideological tone of *Deli Yürek* and the other films I discuss in this chapter betrays the difference in the 1990s between the two media. The television serials exploited the militarization of everyday life throughout the decade by reproducing several masculine fantasies of potency against the casualties inflicted by the war on the young male bodies, whereas, cinematic productions engaged in the human costs of the war.

On the other hand the difference between the big budget films and the political films' engagement in the war particularly and in the 'political' in general, addresses the popular cinema-art cinema debate that shaped the decade's film criticism. As briefly mentioned earlier, the 1990s witnessed the revival of Turkish cinema in a 'new' identity, while political commentary was one axis of the film production the other one was regaining the national audience from the big budget Hollywood films that had dominated the box office for a long time. Both *Eskiya* and *Vizontele* were advertised as big productions using the latest technology redefining the average cost of film production in Turkish cinema. Both films attracted record audience even beating the Hollywood film in

the box office returns. Yet the films also used more subtle political commentary risking being missed by the film critics complaining about the films commercially driven marketing strategies. For the political ‘art’ films with more direct engagement in the region and the war, the 1990s was a new era in another sense. As a result of the rapid forced migration to Istanbul, the center of cinematic production, Kurds became part of both urban life and cultural production in the western metropolises. In 1991, Mesopotamia Cultural Center (Navenda Çanda Mezapotamya) is founded by the Kurdish artists to promote Kurdish culture. The Center provided technical and institutional support for the Kurdish artists throughout the 1990s. While the Center’s prime importance lies in production of first Kurdish films in Turkey thus contributing to a Kurdish cinema, the filmmakers worked as assistants to the films of ‘new Turkish cinema.’ *Güneşe Yolculuk* by Yeşim Ustaoğlu was supported by the Center and one of the directors of Kurdish cinema Kazim Öz, member of the Center, worked as assistant director in the film. The visibility of Kurdish artist within the national cultural production contributed to the ideology of cinematic production during the decade.

For the State of Emergency which ended in July 2002 to an important extent defined my time-frame, I will end ‘the long 1990s’ within the first half of the first decade of 2000s. Although the war remained as the main concern in the more recent films made later in the decade, these films went back to the 1990s as their narrative time to reflect of the war. *Yazı-Tura/Toss-Up* (Uğur Yücel 2007) critically reflects on the life two ex-commando who did their military service in the region in 1999. The film focuses on the

post-traumatic distress syndrome suffered by the main characters as a result of military operations they conducted in the region. After a military operation, one of the characters, Rıdvan, realizes that during the armed encounter he shot his ex-lover who had to move back to her village in the region and joined the PKK after her village was burned down by the army. After seeing her dead body, Rıdvan goes mad and starts running berserk, shooting in the air. He steps on a landmine that blows one of his legs. Cevher, his teammate, loses his hearing in one ear during the same explosion as he tries to rescue Rıdvan. After the military service Rıdvan, a disabled veteran, gets comatosed due to heavy drinking, while Cevher becomes cocaine addict and ends up in the prison after killing a man⁴³. *Güneşi Gördüm/I Saw the Sun* (Mahsun Kırmızıgül 2009) tells the story of a Kurdish family who had to leave their village during the war in 1990s. *Nefes: Vatan Sağolsun/The Breath: Long Live the Nation* (Levent Semerci 2009) is a pro-Army account of the experience of the Turkish soldiers during their military service in the ‘southeast’ in the early 1990s. On the other hand, during the second half of the decade, Kurdish directors started making films as part of the emergent Kurdish cinema – which will be the subject of the next chapter.

⁴³ The camera use in the film works successfully to create a particular spatial feeling. Through handheld camera, the cinematographer creates a nauseating spatial feeling during the armed encounter: The point of view does not allow to orient the soldiers within the space. The same moving, unfocused camera movement is used both when Rıdvan is comatosed due to excessive alcohol consumption and during the earthquake in Istanbul to which Cevher loses his uncle. In both cases, like back in the region, both Rıdvan and Cevher lose control over their senses.

FORCED MIGRATION AND THE NEW CINEMATIC SPACE

Istanbul has been the city of arrival in Turkish cinema projecting several waves of migrants since 1960s social realism, in films like *Gurbet Kuşları/Birds of Exile* (Halit Refiğ 1964), *Bitmeyen Yol/Neverending Road* (Duygu Sağıroğlu 1966), etc. *Gelin/The Bride* and *Düğün/The Wedding* (Lütfi Ömer Akad 1973, 1974). It has been a ‘city made of gold’ that would be shared by the new comers or the city of escape from one’s blood enemies, where nobody can find the escapees. Istanbul was believed able to accommodate whoever comes. Yet the same the lure that attracted people would destroy them. While every migration is necessitated by particular events, here I will take the cinematic representation of ‘forced migration’ which involved proximate to three million people during the emergency period. Unlike the earlier migrations, the reason behind moving westward in forced migration is not primarily for a better life or a personal matter. It’s instigated by depopulating the region (Jongerden 2007). The narrative function of cinematic migration is also quite different as we shift to the forced migration: earlier waves and the arrivals in the western cities were framed as the dissolution of the migrants within the cosmopolitan Istanbul: Families coming to Istanbul to ‘make it’ there would be ‘crushed within the cogs of the machine’ called Istanbul; or those coming to Istanbul to ‘conquer’ it, as was the case in the 1980s ‘arabesque’ films on ‘easterner’ singers⁴⁴. The identity of those who are *forced* to migrate to western cities is ambivalent.

⁴⁴ During late 1970s and 1980s, the ‘arabesque films’ became very popular. As a common narrative, an ‘easterner’ comes to Istanbul and finds a job as construction worker. His musical talent is discovered by a music hall owner. His cassettes and LPs sells a lot and he becomes powerful and rich.

Mostly, during the emergency period, the population in the region had two options, either to become a village guard and fight against the PKK, or to move from the village. Those who had to leave were the ones who refused to cooperate with the State. They may be sympathizers of the Kurdish struggle and have to leave for their survival, or they are ‘trapped between two fires’ and had to leave. Those who stay, they had to serve as ‘guard villages’ on the government payroll.

The first cinematic treatment of the depopulated village and migration came in 1996 with *Eşkiya/ The Bandit*, by a well-known director Yavuz Turgul. The film is about an old time bandit, Baran who lived in the prison for the last 35 years. The film opens on the day he is released from the prison. Dressed in a khaki trench coat and kefiyah, a familiar Kurdish attire, Baran comes out of the prison and goes to his village in the eastern city of Urfa only to see in its place a few demolished buildings half-soaked in the lake like water mass. Although he strolls around the hill, he cannot see a sign of the village except for these half-buried buildings. While pondering on the whatabouts of the village, he is approached by Ma Ceran, the madwoman of the village, who, as we would learn later on, is the only one in the village. What Ma Ceran tells Baran upon his query both supplements and subtly questions the literality of the information given at the very beginning of the film in the intertitle that Baran and several other bandits were captured by the army 35 years ago after a fierce armed encounter with the Turkish army. To familiar eyes, the reference to the 1960s bandits is not a coincidence and historically sets the politico-ethical world Baran was used to be a part of: the peasant class who had to

leave their homes up to the mountains to fight the oppressive landlords who are, if still powerful in the region, beneficiaries of the state support. Yet the armed encounter that happened 35 years ago cannot merely work as a background information and considering the then ongoing armed conflict in the region it should be related to the present as well. The very nomenclature of ‘eşkiya,’ which, in the nationalist media of the 1990s, gained the function of defining ‘the PKK,’ thereby politico-culturally de-qualifying the movement, had come to supplement a generic title of ‘terrorist’ which lacks the affective weight of the former. The expression ‘a bunch of eşkiya’ came to define the entire Kurdish movement since the 1980s. It is this double reference of ‘eşkiya’ that gives the historic reference to Baran, indeed a Kurdish name meaning ‘rain.’ Eşkiya Baran, though, represented as honorable old timer, works, within the overall narrative economy of the film, to save the very nomenclature of Eşkiya from the ‘official’ chain of signification. Ma Ceran responds Baran’s query about the village in the following way:

Ma Ceran: Water brought the end to everything. They told us water is coming we should leave. Everybody left their place. Only I am still here. I told them not to go but they did not listen to me. After you went into prison, the system corrupted, Eşkiya. The bad ones reigned. Those who are repressed remain repressed.

[...]

Baran: it’s all over here. Everything is flooded under water. Soon, this will come to our graveyards. Come with me Ma Ceran. You will be food for the

animals.

Ma Ceran: The animals are ours, son. The real evil is somewhere else. I am the madwoman, I cannot go anywhere.

The dialogue between Baran and Ma Ceran helps us to see the subtle intertextuality that connects the history with the present, yet the epic tone of the encounter and the enigmatic style of speech pushes the same intertextuality to the back of the narrative. It is, however, possible to retrieve it through reference to the spatio-temporal matrix of the conversation. While it is easier to know that the water is from the dams constructed on the two main rivers in the region, Tigris and Euphrates, we need to dig into the historical context of the film to understand why people moved out of their places and who are the ones reigned in the region and who are the ones repressed: Why the emptied-flooded village?

What seems to elide the recent critical reflections on the film is this initial embeddedness of the story in an empty-flooded village and the spatial demarcation of *our* animals and the ‘evil’ that is *there*. However, Baran’s disappointment with the vanished village disappears in the critical reflections on the film. Instead Baran’s journey to Istanbul becomes the main concern. In the film, what drives Baran to Istanbul is the shocking bits of news from an old friend from whom Baran learned who was responsible for his imprisonment. Not only did he learn that his best friend, Berfo, betrayed him, he also ‘bought’ Baran’s beloved Keje from her family and moved to Istanbul. The second part of the film follows Baran in Istanbul where he goes to find Berfo who became a

mighty mafia businessman. Asuman Suner (2011) missing the enigmatic conversation between Ma Ceran and Baran, back in the village, claims that in the film Doğu and Baran represent the authentic harmonious anti-image of the corrupt, cosmopolitan, neo-liberal Istanbul. Although it is true that Istanbul is portrayed as a corrupt(ing) place, what was implied happened in the village surely marks it anything but harmonious; the conversation back in the village is nothing less than a sign of rupture.

The dramatic shift in the focus of the narrative – from spatial problematic to the journey of Baran seems to support Suner’s narrative. Moreover, the second part of the film does not give away any answers to the questions left open in the first part regarding what happened in the village in the first place. However, within the overall narrative of the film, the second part only makes sense in relation to the open-ended first part: the Berfo character represents the anxiety over the ‘migrant other’ in the western cities, an anxiety that occupied the national agenda since the early 1990s. I suggest that without the reference to the empty village as the structuring yet enigmatic part, the film loses its critical potential. Whether the director leaves the first part open intentionally or it was meant to be left behind, it gravitates the narrative back to the region.

While Baran had to leave the village for Istanbul to search for Berfo, *Eşkiya* only implies forced migration from the village, although neither Berfo nor Baran’s migration is forced. Nonetheless, the narrative makes it clear that the migration has to do with the ‘repression’ and only Ma Ceran was ‘crazy’ enough to stay and take care of the disappeared village. The film which explicitly referred to the forced migration, made in

the same year as *Eşkiya*, is *Işıklar Sönmesin/Let There Be Light* (Reis Çelik 1996). The film, the first cinematic representation of the war in Turkish cinema, is about a PKK guerilla⁴⁵ and a Turkish army Captain, who end up alone on the mountains after their crew dies due to an avalanche during the army's raid on the PKK guerillas trying to cross the border. While neither of them accepts the other's position during the heated discussion-cum-accusations, they have to collaborate to survive the cold weather. After the guerilla manages to run away from the Captain, they end up in a rundown house in an empty village. Their fight gets disrupted by an old villager, the owner of the house, again the only one in the village with his granddaughter. The old man accuses both the captain and the guerilla in turning the village into a hell. While the four of them is inside, the house gets shot at by unidentified armed men. Hoping to keep the lights on in the village so that the inhabitants would come one day, the old man grabs a torch goes outside to fire the candles of other houses. As he steps out he gets shot and dies. At the very end of the film, the captain and the guerilla run away together from gunfire holding up the granddaughter by both arms and carry her outside the frame under crossfire.

The issue of forced migration is fully taken up in *Güneşe Yolculuk* and *Büyük Adam, Küçük Aşk*. Both films show for the forced migrants, the experience does not end as they leave the region as the stigma follows them in the city they arrive, Istanbul. As Secor puts it in her analysis on the Kurdish migrants in Istanbul, "a city marked both by the

⁴⁵ The film does not take a stand on the identity of the former: He is called both 'terrorist' and 'guerilla' depending on whom addresses him.

intermingling of peoples and by the reinforcement of lines of inclusion and exclusion, of spatialized regimes of difference and control” (2007 p. 40) not only Kurds experience violence through spatial reordering of urban space, it’s also their place of birth that makes them the object of this spatialized violence. In the films I discuss in this section Istanbul is a space where the Kurdish characters experience violence due to the place of birth or due to their dark complexion that serves as indication of birthplace. Migrants are marked by their place of birth. ‘as long as check points become everyday ordering of urban space’ they experience the spatial logic of the nation-state.” The films speak to both the region and what it means to be from that region even when one is outside of it.

Güneş Yolculuk: Multiple spaces of Doğu

Towards the end of the film, in order to bury his friend Berzan’s coffin, who got shot by the police during a public protest, Mehmet, the main character, sets out to a journey to Zorduç, a Kurdish village located near the Syrian border. When he arrives to where the village should be located, he sees a water mass in its place where only the banner of the village is recognizable. The overwhelming scene of partly visible minarets and the utility pole are the only spatial marks from what was once a Kurdish village.

The film is about Mehmet and Berzan, both recently migrated to Istanbul. Mehmet comes from the town of Tire located in the westernmost part of Turkey to search for a job and Berzan comes to Istanbul from the village of Zorduc located in the southeast near Syrian border, to evade the fate of his father who got assassinated by the security forces before Berzan moved to Istanbul. This geographical information is given not only

to spatially orient the audience to the characters⁴⁶ but to situate the characters ethnically, even racially, within the narrative: While they had different reasons for being in Istanbul and came from opposite directions, the dark complexion of Mehmet, an ethnic mark of being Kurdish, makes him ‘easterner’ hence Kurdish hence potential terrorist like most recent Kurdish migrants were being perceived in the 1990s. (Kılıç 1992). The couple meet after Berzan saves Mehmet from being beaten up by hooligans vandalizing in the streets as a way of celebrating the national soccer team’s recent victory. The next day Mehmet visits Berzan at the Eminönü square where the latter works as audio-cassette seller on a wheel-cart. The music Berzan plays, also works as the soundtrack of the film, is by a Kurdish singer. Although Mehmet does not understand the lyrics, he likes the music and Berzan gives him a copy of the album as a gift.

One day during a road control, the police find a bag with a gun next to Mehmet’s seat and captures him. During the interrogation, the police finds the Kurdish album in Mehmet’s pocket. Combining his dark skin and the Kurdish cassette, the police officer reasons that even though in his ID he is from Tire, his parents must be Kurdish⁴⁷. Dark

⁴⁶ The music, works to spatially orient the character: We hear “Amediyê Kêf Xweş e” [Being in Diyarbakir makes one’s spirit happy] by the Kurdish band Koma Amed.

⁴⁷ The analyses of the film claim that Mehmet was really Turkish but for some reason he had darker complexion. While this is supported by how Mehmet perceives and identifies himself in the film, I claim that Mehmet is also Kurdish whose family left the southeast in the 1970s, and did raise Mehmet Turkish to avoid being subjected to discrimination. The film leaves this reading open, not through Mehmet’s self-identification, but through the police officers during his interrogation. Not believing that Mehmet is Turkish, the officer asks him if he takes after his father or mother to which Mehmet answers ‘his father.’ According to the police officer, Mehmet is Kurdish even though his name, unlike Berzan’s, does not carry any ethnic identity. The Kurdish identity of Mehmet makes more sense as the fact addresses another layer of the story. For the fear of discrimination, Mehmet’s family had to put a Turkish-sounding name for him and secreted their identity. On the other hand, even with the classical reading, Mehmet’s dark complexion

complexion and the audio-cassette were in this case seen enough to associate the bag with the gun to Mehmet. After several days of detention and injury, he finally gets released. However, Mehmet's hardships start after the detention, namely after he is marked as Kurdish. His attempt to dye his hair blonde to look like Turkish does not undo the official mark as the police not only had marked his body as Kurdish, hence terrorist, but also the spaces he occupies. He gets fired from his job with the police order. The ramshackle building where he stays together with other migrant youngsters gets marked with red double-cross on the door. Familiar with the mark from before, his friends don't want to have him anymore fearing it will put them in danger too. He goes to Berzan and with his help finds a job at an auto-gallery outside the city. Soon, his new place also gets double-crossed. One day during a public protest in support of the hunger strikes by the political prisoners, Berzan gets shot dead by a police bullet. Mehmet's journey to the sun starts at that moment. He steals a van from his work and takes Berzan's coffin back to Zorduc where he wanted to go back one day. On the way, Mehmet meets people whose language he does not understand. He runs into a family sitting on the road side, in front of a moving truck filled with house stuff. They also had to evacuate their village. Mehmet's attempt to communicate with the elder of the family fails as he learned from the daughter that he does not know Turkish. Mehmet's reverse migration intersect their migration to the West. Mehmet stays in hotel in a city under curfew. In the morning, his short glimpse at the downtown square from his hotel window meets with a number of military tanks

works to reveal the racist prototyping and how this is spatially oriented: dark complexion always takes one 'back' to the east and marks one Kurdish and 'terrorist.'

filling the square. As he gets closer to the village, he sees more and more security towers. When he reaches Berzan's village, the only the banner of the village salutes him. He releases the coffin into the water and watches as the coffin slowly submerges into the water.

Discovering the Kurds: Personal Encounters in the City

Büyük Adam Küçük Aşk/Old Man Little Love (Handan Ipekçi 1999) is about the intractable relationship between a five year old Kurdish girl, Hejar, and the old retired judge, man-of-principle, Mr. Rifat. Hejar is brought by his relative to Istanbul after her family is assassinated by the gendarmerie during a village raid back in the southeast. After their village is evacuated, the relatives come to Istanbul. Her relative takes her to a distant cousin, a lawyer, to take care of her. However, the night Hejar comes, the cousin's apartment gets raided by the police and the cousin and her two activist friends get killed. Mr. Rifat, the next door neighbor, witnesses the raid from the peephole of his door. As a believer in democratic principles of the Republic, what he sees through the peephole shocks Mr. Rifat: even though the cousin informs the police they are surrendering, the squad shots her and the two friends without warning. Hejar manages to hide from the police and while they search the apartment she comes out and stand in front of Mr. Rifat's apartment door. First hesitant to get involved in the event and then after convinced that the police would kill the girl, too, Mr. Rifat lets his housemaid take her in his apartment. As the unaccounted killing by the police was the first shock, his second shock comes when he realizes that the girl does not speak in Turkish. Additionally he

learns that his housemaid can communicate with the girl in Kurdish. Yet Mr. Rifat immediately forbids speaking in Kurdish at home, until he understands that the only way to communicate with Hejar is to learn Kurdish himself.

Film's story proceeds through four intersecting sites: the village, where Hejar lost her parents, the place she leaves behind, at least initially; the cousin's apartment, raided by the police who killed the cousin and the friends; Mr. Rifat's apartment, secure yet homogenizing; and the relatives' overcrowded house in the slum neighborhood by the city's garbage dump site. These four sites regulate the experiences, and maps the itinerary of Kurds in the 1990s bringing together where they had been and where they were. While Mr. Rifat provides Hejar with a place to stay and food, as we later learn when the housemaid Kezban reveals her real 'Kurdish' name, living in the apartment requires assimilation in return for these benefits. After a while, though, being not able to communicate with Hejar, Mr. Rifat asks for Kezban's help to learn basic Kurdish. Yet, his attempt does not suffice to keep Hejar in the apartment. Mr. Rifat finds the relative and lets him take Hejar. Hejar chooses the ramshackle house to the luxurious apartment. While the film provides the critique of the state's spatial strategy during the 1990's, and the stigmatism attached to the bodies in motion, and their less than favorable living conditions, at an allegorical level, the relationship between Hejar and Mr. Rifat refers to the possibility of Kurds being able to 'leave' what seems to be the 'secure' and 'modern' nation-space. Mr. Rifat's apartment, with the sometime suffocating pedagogical incursions by him and Hejar's resistance against them, allegorizes the state's policy

towards minorities⁴⁸. At the end of the film, Mr. Rifat gives up on ‘educating’ Hejar and lets her choose where to go.

GOING ‘BACK’ TO THE EAST: SPATIAL CLAIMS IN THE NAME OF THE STATE

While the ‘return to the village’ program for the rehabilitation of the villages evacuated during the 1990s and for clearing the lands from the landmines for the people who had to migrate from the region can come back to their villages has yet to realize, in cinema, ‘going back’ to the region already started, ironically, not by the people who had to leave the region but by the figures in the name of the state. An ex-special force commander who fantasizes the good old days of the war in 1990s when the army was in control of the region in *Deli Yürek: Bumerang Cehennem*/*Crazy at Heart: The Hell of Bumerang* (Osman Sınav 2001), and an archeology professor looking for the trace of a hidden inscription by a Turkish sultan ‘that would change the history of the region’ in *Büyü/Spell* (Orhan Oğuz 2004) embody the anxiety over the ownership of the region. *Vizontele*, on the other hand reflects on the state’s desire to ‘mediate’ the ‘god’s forsaken’ remote Kurdish village while recruiting its youth by hundreds for a vicious war.

Crazy at Heart: Fantastical Encounters in the Southeast

Deli Yürek starts with a voiceover on a map showing the east of Turkey with a recognizable Kurdistan region highlighted: ‘Here is Mesopotamia, the boomerang hell of global conspiracy. Even the God sent the prophets to this region for the world order,

⁴⁸ Mr. Rifat tries hard to be nice to Hejar yet whenever she does not do what he asks for--- in Turkish--- he gets infuriated and Hejar responds with equal measure. Rifat Bey’s altruism, is coupled with his suspicion and he always looks down upon Hejar. When he realizes that she has lice on her head, his first reaction is to call her “lousy Kurd!”, when she pees underneath on the carpet out of fear he calls her “dirty Kurd.”

because the place was used to be the heaven on earth.’ The voiceover is followed by voices in foreign languages, English, German, Arabic, Persian, Kurdish, Zaza, all explaining the importance of the region. As the voice proceeds, a black board marker writes in English the name of the states that is planned to be founded within the eastern Turkey, all written with their connection to outside powers of Armenia, Iran and Syria. A red marker at the end writes Kurdistan as the mega project of the global conspiracy.

The film is about Yusuf Miroğlu who completed his military service in the ‘southeast’ as a special force commander trained in guerilla warfare to fight PKK. After the first map sequence we see Yusuf and his fiancée in an SUV car going to the city of Diyarbakir to attend the wedding of Yusuf’s best friend, and teammate while in the army, Cemal. This is, however, not the first time Yusuf goes to the city. As shown in the map, Diyarbakir, or Amed in Kurdish, is considered to be the capital of Kurdistan and during the 1990s Yusuf was enrolled in several military operations, in one of which Cemal killed his future brother in law who was fighting on the side of the PKK. On their way to the city, his fiancée asks Yusuf how he and Cemal met in the military. We learn that Yusuf and Cemal were a part of sniper team. During their military service Yusuf and Cemal became like brothers.

However, Cemal gets killed on the first day of the wedding ceremony. After the conversation the preceding night with Cemal during which Cemal says he is the only person who solved the mystery behind the assassination of the chief of Police in Diyarbakir, Yusuf is convinced that the two events are connected. He decides to stay in

Diyarbakir to find the murderer and is joined by the head of their special force back in the army, Bozo, who, as he learned from Cemal, still lives on the mountains as the savior of the region. While Yusuf aimed to find the murderer, as he delves in the case, he realizes that the death of Cemal was necessary for a series of events leading even to the foundation of Kurdistan by the U.S. as a satellite state on the eastern part of Turkey.

While the desire to return to the military rule through reassuming special force capacities is already problematic, what becomes more alarming is what is entitling Yusuf and Bozo reassume their military might, which we learn during the two conversations Yusuf had with Cemal and then with Bozo. A night before his murder, Cemal tells Yusuf that the reason the chief of police is assassinated was his representing the ‘smiling face’ of the state: he, according to Cemal, ‘initiated peace between the state and the people.’ As he is assassinated, ‘people lost their faith in the state that has been cold to them.’ We here a very similar tone in Yusuf’s conversation with Bozo:

Yusuf: People do not smile here much. Why? Why is this land so rigid and ruthless?

Bozo: Our fathers do not smile at their children.

Yusuf: Just like the state. For years, people here have not seen the smiling face of the state.

Bozo: Here is Mesopotamia. The place called Amed. Here, the fight is as old as the history. No matter how far they would be, mighty would extend their arms to this land. The first blood of the human being is spilled on this land: the blood of the brother.

Yusuf: Would not this change at all? Will brothers always kill each other?

Bozo: It's hard. Whoever tries to change it would face the world as enemy. We wanted to use Tigris and Euphrates to irrigate these lands but look what happened: thirty thousand people died.

Yusuf: You mean this is the water politics of the secret services?

Bozo: Only one of the reasons. Do you know who would benefit from the Kurdish state in Iraq? They will bring their military bases, distribute guns and do whatever they want to do. And then three out of five Kurdish children will die. But who cares. What is important for them is to share the rant of 100 billion dollar worth cocaine trade that passes through the region...

Yusuf: There should be a way.

Bozo: There is one way. The state should smile at its people and the people should trust the state. Then there would be no terror and neither Hizbullah nor Abdullah would cause any damage to the nation.

Yusuf: So who is the enemy? Hizbullah?

Bozo: Yesterday we fought Abdullah and when they got what they wanted they gave Abdullah to us. Now it's Hizbullah's turn.

Although the alarming tone of the conversation seems to find the state as part of the problem, at least internally, the solution that is implied betrays the subconscious intention: any correlation between the state and the PKK is erased. While the state is a bad father, 'terrorism,' according to Yusuf and Bozo, is not a matter of internal politics and the state should not be held responsible for its existence. Furthermore, instead of entertaining the possibility of decreasing the power of the state, so that it may stop being 'a bad father', Bozo and Yusuf's alarm is triggered by the weakness of the state. The

desire to go back to 1990s when they were mighty vis-à-vis the enemy ‘pushes’ Yusuf and Bozo to assume the function of the now ‘defunct’ state but not without re-writing the history of the region in accordance with the state’s: ever ready imperialism to incite terrorism inside the national body. The film uses the rhetoric of defunct state only to justify the actions that is beyond the ability of the state.

The above conversation ingeniously divests state of its ‘monopoly over legitimate violence,’ but only to *justify* the existence of extra-legal techniques of the private counter guerilla force to deal with this particular space, the boomerang hell, called Kurdistan. The state should act like a good father, the conversation betrays, while the national threat must be prevented by privatized forces with the extra-state, extra-legal capacities. Indeed, according to Bozo, the state had already not taken any part in the conspiracy except for the corrupt officers who acted as the hands of imperialism. Bozo’s explanations throughout the conversation, inspired by the far-right terminology, denies the state’s involvement in the emergence of Turkish Hizbullah to fight the PKK, the real contribution of the film is the fantasy work that runs through all explanations given by the main characters. The hyper-real representation of the map making use of the real event, the assassination of the chief of police, as the central focus of the film and blending it with fantastical characters works to blur both reality and fantasy and give credence even to the most absurd explanation. When the narrative space is explained as hyper-fantastic, the fantastical characters and connections seems realistic. The character in the film, Butcher Hasan, who was present on the wedding day, and his multiple and

shifting identities works well to blend fact and fiction. First appeared as the cook during the wedding, we later learned that Hasan is the chief Imam of the Hizbullah's Diyarbakir branch and later on we further learned that his real name is David and he is the American secret service agent from Northern Dakota: He, as Bozo explains to Yusuf, can 'speak Kurdish like his native language even with regional accents.' Not only as the head of Hizbullah, in the film, Hasan also is the PKK supporter. Bozo admits that they 'buried so many pro-PKK Imam with cross on their necks.' Although lacking historical accuracy, Hasan's multiple identities fantastically connects the PKK to the US as well as Iran. We see Hasan with the U.S. Ambassador during a secret meeting with the Kurdistan Democrat Party (KDP) representatives from Iraq. However, Hasan is not the only person with multiple identities: the chief of Police replacing the one assassinated is also a double-agent working for Hasan. The retiree Turkish colonel Şeref, a businessman, sides with the U.S. and is a key player in the conspiracy.

Bringing together these agencies can only work in a fantasy where everything becomes possible. Yet, what this hyper-fantasy achieves is to allow Yusuf to single-handedly finish off the conspiracy for the sake of the state. The narrative economy of the film necessitates, and even sanctions, the individualized military violence by Yusuf. What is fascinating is how the conspiracy legitimizes Yusuf's unaccounted for violent mobility in the city of Diyarbakir: he punishes the culprits, blow off the buildings, kills the leaders and so forth. This mobility in a real space, though, is only achieved, in a fantasy work, through imagining the southeast as the *ever changing, foggy, slippery*,

treacherous spatiality that is both the reason of the failure of the state and source of legitimacy for the actions of Yusuf as the revived military might of the defunct state. The film reinstalls the result of the state as the justification for the existence of the *extra-state*.

Going ‘Back in Space’: Traumatic Encounters with the Invisible Kind in *Büyü*

As one of the earliest contemporary horror films in Turkish cinema, *Büyü/Spell* takes place in the Dengizhan village in the city of Mardin. An archeology team headed by a famous archeology professor and joined by ‘one of the best philologist in the world’ goes to the Dengizhan village to search for a 14th century document by the Turkish sultan of the Artuklu Dynasty that would ‘change the history of the region.’ However, not known to the team, it happens that the village is cursed many years ago after a sorcerer came to the village and cast spell on the villagers to sacrifice their newborn daughters to the devil. While this initial “artifice of grave importance in the cursed space” narrative resembles the *Indiana Jones* kind of imperial mobility of a scientist claiming –and taming—the space in question to the geography of the empire, the professor in the Turkish variation is not equally apt to survive the curse. This is not without its specific reasons, though.

First of all, while the modern-primitive axis that motivates the narrative in *Indiana* is also present in *Büyü*, it’s not the only one, the conflict runs deeper than that. While the language of the ceremony that the sorcerer performed to claim the last daughter in the village gives no sign as to her ‘origin,’ the conflict between her and the village is framed as between pre-Islamic cult and the Islamic belief as is seen in the frame where

the Quran hanged on the wall in the daughter's room is hidden by the stepmother aligning with the sorcerer to eliminate the possible obstacle in the way of getting rid of the girl. Although this originary allegorical trope is later conflicted with the modern methodology of the archeology professor, it will contribute to the death of the professor and the entire team at the end of the film. On their way to the village the team take a break on a small road-side tea house run by an old man. When the old man learns that the team is going to the village, he immediately warns the team that the village is cursed and has been empty for a long time. We learn the entire story of the village from the old man. However, he fails to convince the professor as the latter does not believe in the story: 'so many stories like this are told in this region and they are all legend without bases.' The tension shifts from the devil vs. Muslims to pre-modern vs. modern/scientific method. The dichotomy may seem to entitle the team to do the excavation and register the cursed space –by giving it an identity—into the national history, but alas the film denies the team's mastery over the space, hence the national desire remains unfulfilled.

The main tension starts as the team continues its journey to the village after the tea break. This time they are supported by two mule riders, assigned by the old man, guiding them the village. Yet while the guides supposed to help them, there is a clear difference between the two as to the spatial and temporal orientation. One of the assistants complains that whenever he asks to the guides how long they are far from the village the answer is a vague 'very soon.' They 'don't have a conception of neither time nor space.' Moreover, although the team has one of the best philologist in the world,

nobody can understand the language of the two men guiding them to the village. Intentionally made audible, the conversation between the two guides in Kurdish works only to confuse and scare the team. As the director wants us, the audience, to hear and possibly understand the conversation but denies the team from that information and leaves them vulnerable, we should read the entire trip to the region through the relationship between the team, the old man and the two mule riders.

The curse starts to take effect as the group come closer to the village. During a break in a cave an earthquake scares the guides and the team has to proceed without them. The village appears right at the other end of the cave. Not only does the team not know the language of the guides, their maps and knowledge also proves insufficient to navigate through the village. Without any knowledge, the only information the professor retains of the region is the engaging exclamation that “the people of Doğu are strange, indeed.” In the narrative economy of the film, this lack of information about the region while going there to search for a 14th century document creates an inconsistency, yet an intentional one. How come a famous archeology professor and ‘one of the best in the world’ philologist are so dumb-founded in the village and not even able to communicate with the guides, if this is not to address a trauma that denies any knowledge to them about the region. Has the mystery of the village and its self-motivated catastrophes against the team to do with the curse or it was the source of the trauma that left the team without knowledge?

The *invisible* beings haunting the team and the *unknown* language spoken by the people whom the professor identifies as ‘people from Doğu’ subtly connects the traumatic experience with the space to the curse. The trauma is also due to the realization that the team do not know anything about the space that they come to claim to the national historiography. In a conversation with the team, the professor reasons why the village is not inhabited by anybody for a long time: ‘may be for months or even for years, the soil has not seen a drop of rain. Its dry and hard. It’s obvious why people could not live on this land’. Yet the explanation falls to deaf ears as the team is frightened enough not to give credence to a scientific explanation and the disconnect cause the explanation hanging in the air. That one of the assistants finds a knife –the one we see at the beginning of the film carried by the father to kill his daughter-- right beneath the surface that the professor claims belongs to 14th century also creates temporal inconsistency as to whether the traumatic event happened in the present or in the long past.

With the other films of the period on the southeast, I claim that the space of the empty village, whether it is cursed or evacuated by the military is a way to engage in the discussion of war. By making the enemy invisible and the space unknown, *Büyü* alludes to the traumatic experience of war through the trope of the haunted space. While the team go to claim the village, their lack of knowledge and indifference made the team vulnerable to the space and its invisible (and unrecognized) inhabitants.

VIZONTELE: MEDIA, NATION-SPACE AND VARIATIONS ON THE WAR

Vizontele (2001) is written and co-directed by the actor-director Yılmaz Erdoğan

of Kurdish descent. While the film is not directly about the war in 1990s, it takes place during another war, the Cyprus incursion of 1974 and a possible allegorical reference to the current war in the 1990s more than simply implied. *Vizontele* is about the coming of Television to a 'remote' eastern town on the Iran and Iraq border. The effect of Television on the town is described by the mayor during the opening ceremony:

The newspapers come here two day after their dates. When an event excites us, people in the big cities do not even remember it. Now Vizontele will change this. We will watch the same event at the same time with Istanbul. Vizontele will make far nearer and here will not be that far anymore.

For the mayor, television would connect the town to the rest of the country, yet it's function is not only this. The new technology is about *being seen* as much as it is about to *see* although it raises some concerns in some townspeople: 'if they can also see us, what would we do during the news! Prime minister and the President will also show up, we will have to dressed up all the time.' Yet for a 'remote' place that is outside the purview of the state, both seeing and being seen is deemed important as it means part of the nation. Yet the director does not celebrate the arrival of the TV set. While television would sync the town with the West, it's probable catastrophic effects is heralded by the mayor's wife who thinks of the television as the 'devil's invention'. While the wife opposes the technology from a religious standpoint, through this opposition the director comments on the nationalizing effect of the television both as technology and as the message: the technology, the receiver, is part of production of nation-space by

distributing the signals to the far reach corners of the national territory, the ‘message’, the programs, would work to introduce the town, and the region, into the visual economy of the nation. In order to deal with the possible effect of the television, the film constructs two temporalities in the town: one is the everyday and the other is the national temporality. While the former includes the bitter yet humorous functioning and interaction of people, the latter comes in through conscription and now the arrival of the officers from the public television. Television means the subsumption of the everyday by the national temporality. Through the mother, the film connects two contents of national temporality, conscription and Television: her son goes to the military service and Television replaces him in the house and she warns the mayor that it is not a good sign.

The mother’s melancholy over her son who will do the military service dramatically effects the tone of the film. The conscription is an incursion by the national temporality from the beginning. Yet this incursion is felt only by the oldest son of the mayor who is drunken and the mother both not quite part of the everyday life of the town. The only political comment on the conscription comes from the drunken son and his friends during one of their drinking session: As the public bus full of new conscripts passes in front of them they express their worry: “the bus is taking the soldiers. My brother Rifat is also in it. They collected all the youngsters. Why did they collect so many this time?” the scene dissolves as the camera pans to the fire.

However, while the travel of television to the ‘eastern’ town is to *include* it into the space and time of the nation, the process involves public officers who are reluctant to

be far away from the state. However, the combination of the intended ideological function of the television with the insecure bureaucracy who is not willing to be a part of that function in a far away place for quite other ideological reasons results in the tension between the *desire* to *include* and *reluctance* to *go*. The public officials from Ankara, the national capital, who are in charge of installing the receiver and the TV set in the town are worried because, the job is the least desirable kind 'public 'job given to the blacklisted officers who are deemed ideologically subversive. Doğu is a place of internal exile, or as one of the officers put it 'the place that even the God does not stop by.' Worried that the assignment is a sign of their exile, the public officers immediately leaves the town without installing the receiver and the TV set, only informing the mayor that they have to install the receiver the highest possible point so that it receives the signals. As there is no technician in the town, the mayor asks Crazy Emin to help working things out, assuming that since he can repair radio, he should be able to make the 'radio with pictures' work too. After trying the receiver in several hilltops in around the town and fail, Crazy Emin decides to climb the mountain Artos, where 'nobody ever dared climbing.' After so much difficulty, and having already received the TV signals from Iran, the team finally gets the Turkish signals at a higher point in the mountains. To celebrate the first day of the Turkish TV channel, the entire town gathers in the mayor's house. They turn on the TV and start watching the evening news. The first news is about the Cyprus war. The speaker announces the four martyrs with their pictures. The picture of Rifat, the mayor's son freezes the entire crowd in front of the television.

The death of the son and his picture as the first things seen on the television is a brilliant commentary on the spatial stakes concerning the 'eastern' town. While the television came to the town as sign of the production of nation-space through spatial modernization, it is realized through a death. While the excitement was to see and to be seen, what the townspeople saw in the representation was their own death. The coupling of the television and the death refers to two temporalities: first to the 1990s televisual news culture where the photos of the martyrs were used as a strategy of nationalizing the mourning second the time of the arrival of the first television set to the region. in the latter sense the television set metaphorically replaces the death body. the film defines the founding moment of representation (being seen as well as standing in for) as the realization of the loss of what is represented, i.e. the death of the son. The picture of Rifat on the TV screen also summarizes for them the terms of being included into the nation-space. At the end, the mother buries the TV set to not only avenge the death of her son but as his representation whose body never arrives the town.

CONCLUSION

During the long 1990s, when the southeast as the center of armed conflict became a space of emergency, we saw the migration as the main trope through which the region is represented. While the interest in 'mobility' was result of the forced migration of about three million people in a decade, the films on Doğu can be understood not by the 'mobility' but by the dialectics of two spatiality the characters have come to occupy as a result: the *empty-flooded village* and the *urban center of Istanbul*. The political-art films

of the period such as *Güneşe Yolculuk* put forward their politics of space more openly by showing how their characters' mobility turns into [national] spatial entrapment both in the village and the newly inhabited urban space. However, in films like *Eşkiya* and *Vizontele*, the use of fast editing, high-end cameras – the latter was promoted as the first Turkish film using the micro cameras attached to battery operated flying equipment—manipulated the reflection on the films towards technical and commercial sides of the films missing the subtle spatial commentaries they included within their narrative.

CHAPTER V – KURDISH CINEMA AND REMAPPING NATION-SPACE

The question of the father isn't how to become free in relation to him (an Oedipal question) but how to find a path there where he didn't find any.

Kafka: *Toward a Minor Literature*.

Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari

-- And [I have] a heart which I can throw just like a hand bomb to destroy all fucking borders.

Gitmek: My Marlon and Brando

(Hüseyin Karabey 2008)

INTRODUCTION

The debates on the existence of a 'Kurdish cinema' started in the late 1990s, especially after the international release of Bahman Ghobadi's award winning *Zamane Baraye Masti Asbha / A Time for Drunken Horses* (2000), yet films on Kurds and their socio-economic situation first appeared in the 1920s. Armenian director Hamo Beknazarian's *Zarê* (1926) (Alakom 2009) and Merian C. Cooper, Ernest Schoedsack, and Marguerite Harrison's *Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life* (1925) are cited among the first films within the genealogy of this new Cinema. While the films that have informed and inspired the discussion on Kurdish cinema have been made 'outside' of Turkey, the

political and aesthetic parameters of the object of debate, namely Kurdish cinema, and the desire and commitment to discuss the possibility of a Kurdish cinema is driven by the discussions emanating from Turkey. Within the historiography on Kurdish cinema, in addition to the abovementioned ‘first’ films made *on* Kurds by the foreign directors, Yılmaz Güney’s *Seyyit Han*, is considered the first ‘Kurdish film,’ made by a Kurdish director. Long considered to be a seminal Turkish social realist film, *Seyyit Han* has retrospectively been incorporated into the history of Kurdish cinema. *Seyyit Han* in this respect shares the status of another film: *Yol/The Road* (1981). The film was written and supervised by Yılmaz Güney while in prison and directed by his assistant Şerif Gören. Güney is considered the founding father of Kurdish cinema, even though neither *Seyyit Han* nor *Yol* satisfy what is considered by the scholars, critics and the directors as an essential criterion of what makes a Kurdish film, namely, film being in Kurdish language. Yet, both films signify a major break, both aesthetically and politically, from what was considered Turkish ‘national cinema’. *Yol* was followed by the first ‘Kurdish language’ film, dated 1992, *Klamek Ji Bo Beko / A Song For Beko* by Nizamettin Arıç, a Kurdish political refugee in Germany and born in the city of Urfa in Turkey. Kazım Öz’s *Ax / The Earth* (1999) and *Fotograf/Photograph* (2001) are also early examples of Kurdish Cinema from Turkey both dealing with the 1990s militarization and its effects on the Kurdish region.

Following the earlier chapters, here, I offer a spatial reading of Kurdish cinema. In the first three chapters on Turkish cinema, I argued that the cinematic representation of

what constitutes eastern Turkey is productive of the spatiality called ‘Doğu’ as part of Turkish nation-space. In this chapter, I suggest that Kurdish cinema, dealing with the same region, deconstructs the discourse of ‘Doğu’ as cinematic space, offering instead a new spatiality. What I call a deconstructive turn in the representation of the region as Doğu has started with the films of Yılmaz Güney and cautiously – due to the rigid boundaries of the critical reflection on the issue-- continued in the 1990s. In Turkey, in the second part of the 1990s, the PKK’s 1993 cease-fire and the Turkish state’s recognition of the ‘Kurdish reality’ resulted for a while in a more favorable political culture, during which time several Turkish directors, sometimes assisted by the young Kurdish directors, made films critical of the state policies within the eastern region and about the precarious lives of the Kurdish population having to migrate to the western metropolises as a result of the armed conflict within the region. An important part of what Asuman Suner calls “new Turkish cinema” (Suner, 2010), these films of the late 1990s already engaged in problematizing the discourse of Doğu. While parallel to the politicization of cinematic language in Turkish cinema in the 1990s, Kurdish cinema has other parameters setting it apart from the new Turkish cinema, such as the use of Kurdish language as the primary language of the films, connection with the Kurdish political struggle, and dealing mainly with the lives of Kurdish population.

THE ROAD TO ‘KURDISTAN’: THE SPACE OF KURDISH CINEMA

Starting from *Seyyit Han* (1968), the film Yılmaz Güney considered his first film exhibiting his directorial style and *Yol / The Road* (1982), Kurdish directors from Turkey

made films that problematized Turkish nation-state, national identity and Turkish national cinema. As discussed in the chapter on social realism, ‘national cinema’ in the Turkish context aimed at producing a secular national culture within the national territory. *Seyyit Han* was different in terms of both its formal structure and its politics of representation. The film deconstructs the teleological temporality of popular films of the period. The film starts in the middle of the story of the main protagonist, Seyyit Han. He comes back to his village after a 7-year quest, yet no clue is given as to the reason for the quest. Piece by piece, we learn Seyyit Han’s story from the rumors spread in the village after his arrival. As the narrative unfolds, a voiceover narrates the first half of the story with flashbacks, and at the end of the film the beginning of the story told by the voiceover overlaps the visual ending.⁴⁹ The censor board banned the film on the premise that the name of the lead female character, Keje, is not a Turkish name, and the banners shown during the wedding ceremony do not belong to Turkish culture. Güney intentionally put the name and the banner – both elements of Kurdish culture – to give a more ‘truthful’ account of the region, as the film was intended to be realist(Turanli 2005).

His *Yol/The Road* (1982) was a turning point for cinema in Turkey in terms of its configuration of the narrative space. The film not only produced an uncompromising critique of the repressive state apparatuses within the eastern region, an impossible task due to the film censorship and the ideology of cinematic production, but also, for the first

⁴⁹ See the discussion of the film in the second chapter.

time the cartography of cinematic space diverged from the national cartography and ‘Kurdistan’ entered the cinematic space.

Yol’s narrative structure was also different from earlier and contemporary films in that it introduced a story with multiple protagonists in which all characters are assigned the same weight within the narrative. The film follows five prison inmates en route to their hometowns in the Kurdish region during a national holiday break. As they travel throughout the national landscape, the film shows the road signs of the cities they pass. We see the sign ‘Kurdistan’ as one of the characters, Ömer, passes through the city of Urfa, located at the border of Kurdistan, according to Kurdish maps. The sign is added by Güney during the editing process, but it was excised from the versions released in Turkey⁵⁰. Güney’s *cinemato-graphing* redraws the map of the region within which the film takes place in accordance with Ömer’s cognitive attachment.⁵¹ This authorial ‘supplement’ also refers to a discrepancy between the national cartography and how Güney maps the region within the cinematic space.

The new cartography, however, does not work in favor of Ömer and the other characters in the film. It only explains the violence that the audience, through the characters, experiences during the rest of the film. After one of the characters, Mevlut,

⁵⁰ I have reached three different copies of the film. One is the version released outside Turkey, the film has English subtitles and retains the Kurdistan sign. Another version, that I could not trace the distribution place, shows the city of ‘Urfa-Siverek’ instead of Kurdistan. In the DVD version released in Turkey, neither the Kurdistan sign nor Siverek appears.

⁵¹ Marcus Power and Andrew Crampton discuss ‘cinemato-graphing of political space’ (p. 4) in their edited work “Cinema and Popular Geo-politics” Power and Crampton argue for the productive power of cinematic mapping.

gets off the bus in Urfa, the camera focuses on the face of Ömer who is still waiting for his stop. As he nears his destination, the excitement on his face becomes more acute. He finally gets off the bus in the middle of a vast landscape and kisses the ground. We see him from a wide-angle shot running in the green landscape, playing with a dog chasing him. However, his excitement and sense of ‘freedom’ does not last long. As he hears the sound of gunshots, his expression changes into fear. The nearer he gets to his village, the more frequently the gunshots explode. His village is surrounded by the gendarmerie chasing border smugglers.⁵² Ömer can only enter the village after the smugglers surrender to the gendarmerie. The operation against the smugglers continues the entire night. The next day, the Gendarmerie brings the dead bodies of the smugglers for identification. In fear of retaliation, Ömer cannot claim the body yet after his brother’s death, Ömer decides to join the smugglers and at the end, we see him riding his horse along with the other smugglers to the mountains outside the village.

The film shared Palm d’Or at the Cannes Film Festival with *Missing* by Costa Gavras in 1982 and has been the subject of academic as well as non-academic debates in Turkey ever since its domestic release in the late-1990s, after a long term ban by the post 1980 coup military government that confiscated the film together with Güney’s other films. Güney’s citizenship was also revoked after he fled the country during a furlough

⁵² Whether the smugglers are real smugglers or they stand for Kurdish guerillas is only implied in the film. When Ömer decides to join the ‘smugglers’ we understand that what he is going for is more than smuggling. In the perception of the army, on the other hand, the line separating the two easily disappears as both smugglers and guerillas -- “smugglers and separatists”-- are equal threat to the territorial integrity of the nation.

that the characters in his *Yol* were granted. Though *Yol* has been commented upon by critics, the part of the film where Güney inserted the road sign ‘Kurdistan’, has been missed – or skipped--within these comments. The lack of scholarly attention is partly due to the excision of the part in the ‘Turkish’ version yet a few comments referring to that part dismisses it as not being the original part of the film⁵³ but added ‘later on’ by Güney. But, if a film is finalized during the editing, and the part is added during the editing process, the dichotomy between what constitutes original and addition becomes problematic. What makes one original and the other addition? As an argument, we can even say that, since the film was only supervised by Güney from the prison and directed by his assistant, the ‘addition’ is the only part that is directly put in by Güney; strictly speaking, originally Güney’s. Yet in discrediting the ‘addition,’ there is more than the film and its truth value. What makes the sign inferior to, and less original than, the rest of the film, if not the pre-conviction of the commenter on the originality of what he considers as the original: the national territory. We can make sense of this hierarchy of original/addition within the cartography of the film (the very position of the extra footage, the ‘excess’ film within ‘the reel’) only in connection with the national cartography (the truth value of its map and ‘Kurdistan as addition’): the belief in the national territory and the disbelief in what the sign refers to: Kurdistan. The ‘real’ cartography here determines the limit of the reel cartography. There is also the itinerary

⁵³ The political Identity of Yilmaz Güney is still a matter of debate within the historiography on Turkish cinema. The liberal writers, like Atilla Dorsay, had an uneasy relationship with his late pro-Kurdish stance, as he thinks it was an influence he gained while in prison (Dorsay, 2005)

of the film's completion process. In order to complete the film, Güney fled Turkey and went to Switzerland where he was 'present' during the editing process yet absent in Turkey, the absence which made the completion of the films possible. However, to play with this arbitrary original vs. addition debate, one can claim from the perspective of Jacques Derrida that the sign works as the "supplement" to national cartography as 'presence.' In discussing Jean-Jacques Rousseau's writing on 'writing' as destruction of presence, while speech constituting the presence (1976, 142), Derrida uses Rousseau's often used term supplement to deconstruct this and other dichotomies of absence and presence (original and addition) in his texts by recourse to its double meaning as a) addition to something already complete and b) as substituting a lack thereby completing what is already claimed as complete. Kurdistan as 'sign' within the cartography of the film and Kurdistan as geography, taken as 'supplement,' "exterior addition" (p. 145) may be taken as serving to give completion-- only in the sense of providing the complete picture of what constitutes 'national territory' as presence. For Güney's absence from Turkey, one can only say it made the completion of the film possible. While the film was shown 'outside' of Turkey when Güney received the Cannes award in France, until the late 1990s the film was banned -- absent -- in Turkey. Then, when it was shown in Turkey, the absence of the sign also further comments on the complicity of the geography of exhibition and its cartographic determinants, and the geography within the film. The comments on originality of the film suggests that the limit of the originality of the film *as it could be shown* in Turkey constitutes its overall authenticity. The film, however,

problematizes the arbitrary equivalency of the geography of exhibition (its authenticity depends on what it can be shown in a particular place), and the geography within the film (both the sign as place and as extra footage). Completion, either through the excision of the part, which is what happened during the public screenings in Turkey, or alternatively, completion by seeing the film through that part that is deemed as addition, as supplement.

As for the narrative function of the sign, as supplement, it addresses both Turkish nation-space as the central problematic and the patriarchy that is still intact in that space the road sign refers to. The tension between the *existence* of ‘Kurdistan’ and its catastrophic effects on the characters inhabiting it is kept up throughout the film. Rather than a utopian space, Kurdistan is shown as ‘space of entrapment,’ not only of the state apparatuses but also of the apparatuses of feudalism. Yet the sign, cleverly works to separate simultaneously the region as ‘Kurdistan’ and reconnect it to Turkish nation-space as product of state violence, the sign becomes a deconstructive point to address the entire nation-space as space of entrapment. Waiting the characters in the region, hence, is not any better than their prison life. Seyyit Ali’s wife, who started working in a brothel after he ends up in prison, is kept in the basement on her parents’ house until her husband takes her life to avenge the honor of the family, in accordance with the traditions. Mevlüt constantly complains about his fiancée’s female relatives who keep them under surveillance the entire time they are together. The brothel he goes to feel ‘free’ does not give him respite, as its prison-like structure only exacerbates his claustrophobia when the prostitute tells him to wait in the room with the same number as his prison cell. Mehmet

Salih finds his wife, Emine, in the house of her parents who, after the accident caused by him costing his brother-in-law's life, declares him as blood enemy. The couple escapes the city by train. However, during their claustrophobic train ride, their son shoots them.

The films in this chapter are dealing with the issues relating the mechanisms of construction and the maintenance of nation-space such as national borders, militarization of everyday life, and national pedagogy. Although Kurdish cinema refers to the films on Kurds in the diaspora, Iraq, Iran and Syria, and Turkey, my main focus here is what is referred to as 'Kurdistan Bakur,' which overlaps with the territory constituting Doğu. In order to discuss the films, I specify three sites through which the discourse of Doğu is deconstructed in Kurdish cinema: city, village, and the border. In the first site, I analyze films dealing with the production of urban space within the region since 1990s. I look at two films, *Min Dît/I Saw* (Miraz Bezar, 2004), on the life of two siblings in the city of Diyarbakir after their parents are assassinated by the secret paramilitary state force, JITEM (Gendarmerie Intelligence Anti-Terror Team) and *Press* (Sedat Yılmaz 2010), which also takes place in Diyarbakir, and deals with the pro-Kurdish daily, *Özgür Gündem* (Independent Agenda) that started publishing in 1990s. For the second site, I analyze the production of village space, and look at two films. The first is *Ax/The Earth* (Kazım Öz 1999), which narrates the story of Zelo, the elder of a Kurdish village, who decides to stay in his village with his wife and dog after the village is evacuated for the security reasons by the gendarmerie. The second film, *İki Dil Bir Bavul/On the Way to School* (Özgür Doğan and Orhan Eskiköy 2008), chronicles the life of a Turkish primary

school teacher assigned to a primary school in a Kurdish village, where almost no students know Turkish. The film depicts the absurd encounter of non-Turkish speaking Kurdish students with their non-Kurdish speaker teacher. For the third site, I examine production of border space. The main focus here is Turkey's eastern and southern borders with reference to the films taking place on the Iran-Iraq border. *Klamek Ji Bo Beko/A Song For Beko* (Nizamettin Arıç 1992) is on Beko who, after the disappearance of his brother, sets out a journey across four parts of 'Kurdistan' to search for him. *Dol/Valley* (Hiner Saleem 2007) is about Azad, who is living in a village on the Turkish side of Turkey-Iraq border and has to cross the border into Kurdistan after shooting a military officer on the day of his wedding. While not directly related to the borders of Turkey, Bahman Ghobadi's films taking place on the Iran-Iraq border are perfect examples of how Kurdish directors perceive and experience the borders. Ghobadi's films deal with families and relatives whose lives are divided by the borders and have to cross the borders to survive economic and political hardships. *Zamani Barayé Masti Asbha / A Time for Drunken Horses* (2000) tells the story of five orphaned siblings taken care of by the oldest brother who has to do border smuggling across the heavily mined Iran-Iraq border. *Niwemang/Half Moon* (Bahman Ghobadi 2006) is about a Kurdish musician family who, after the fall of Saddam, want to cross to Iraq to perform on a concert to celebrate Saddam's fall. *Gomgashtei dar Aragh/Marooned in Iraq* (2002) is about a man who wants to cross the border into Iraq to see his dying ex-wife.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ In choosing the films, I attempted to select representative films while limiting the focus to those dealing

INTERNATIONAL KURDISH CINEMA CONFERENCE

The themes and concerns of the chapter are informed by the International Kurdish Film Festival [Konferansa Sinemaya Kurdî ya Navnetewî] that took place in the city of Diyarbakir in 2009. The conference was the first – and so far the only one– of its kind. Although during the last decade several Kurdish film festivals have been organized in different capitals of the world such as London, Paris, New York, Melburn, Montreal, Berlin, the conference was the first occasion for the Kurdish directors, critics and a large audience to share an organized platform to discuss the concept of ‘Kurdish Cinema.’ It was also important that a Kurdish cinema conference could be organized in Turkey’ despite the repression of the discussion of Kurdish problem outside the state venues due mainly to the support of the pro-Kurdish Diyarbakir Metropolitan municipality, which also hosted the event, and despite all the odds attached to the volatile political process between the government and the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) that was banned by the Constitutional Court during the same month as the conference on the premise of its alleged connection with the PKK.

with the spatiality ‘ Kurdistan Bakur’. While a general study on Kurdish cinema would likely include Hisham Zaman’s *Vinterland* (2007) about Renas, a Kurdish refugee in Norway who wants to get married to a woman from ‘Kurdistan’ (of Iraq), Yuksel Yavuz’s *Kleine Freiheit / Little bit of Freedom* (2003) about Baran, a Kurdish refugee in Germany, and Hüseyin Karabey’s *Gitmek: My Marlon and Brando /To Go: My Marlon and Brando* (2008), about a Turkish woman falling in love with a Kurdish man from Iraq and her attempt to reach her during the 2003 U.S. intervention, these are not included in the chapter. Also excluded is Kazım Öz’s *Fotograf*, which is about road friendship of two adolescents on their way to the eastern Turkey/Kurdistan), one going to attend Turkish Army, the other attending the PKK. Öz elegantly deals with the characters’ different attachments to that space while connecting the story to the larger issue of the militarization and nation-space. Since his earlier film *Ax*, included in the chapter, addresses a very similar process. I decided to use only one of them to avoid overlap.

The main concern of the conference was to *define* the emergent Kurdish cinema: whether or not it can be considered ‘national cinema,’ how to handle the political, technological, financial, and aesthetics hardships affecting the film productions; strength and weaknesses of the existing films, and the must-do’s of the Kurdish cinema.⁵⁵ What was fascinating during the conference was the overcritical response of the audience towards the films shown throughout the conference.⁵⁶ The directors, whose films had been premiered at international film festivals and praised by international audiences were obviously not expecting such an intense level of criticism. One of the films screened during the conference, *Min Dît/Before Your Eyes* (Miraz Bezar 2009) was dismissed on account of misrepresenting political ‘facts’, and the inability to capture the ‘revolutionary atmosphere’ during the 1990s that was the films starting point. *Kilometre Zero* (2005, Hiner Saleem) was dismissed due to its confused linguistic map of ‘Kurdistan’. The main

⁵⁵ From the selection of the directors, the films and the presenters, it was obvious that the organizers, and later confirmed by the participants, had a clear idea what is *not* to be included in Kurdish cinema. Kurdish directors Yılmaz Erdoğan, Mahsun Kırmızıgül, and Gani Rızgar Savata are not invited to the conference. Erdoğan, while a progressive artist and director and have a pro-Kurdish stance in terms of government’s Kurdish policies, has not been engaged in Kurdish issue in his two films *Vizontele* (2001), and *Vizontele: Tuuba* (2004) taking place in the Kurdish region. The films are made for the general public and received huge box office return. Kırmızıgül’s position is less favorable. A singer-actor turned director, his films, *Beyaz Melek / White Angel* (2004) and *Güneşi Gördüm / I Saw the Sun* (2009), both dealing with the Kurdish issue, are considered ‘self-orientalizing’ pieces reproducing the discourse of noble savage, while failing to address state violence in the region. *Güneşi Gördüm* confirms the ‘terrorist-innocent Kurd-State’ discursive triangle that has been fashioned by the state to solve the Kurdish problem. The films starts in a Kurdish village under the cross-fire by the Turkish army and the PKK. A Turkish army commander helps to the villagers to ‘evacuate’ the village and offer a family to go to his hometown to stay with his family until they find a job there. The ‘relationship’ stirred criticism against the film during a process that the Human rights records mention the number of the villages evacuated as many as 4000. (Human Rights Watch). In ‘The Kurdophilia of Official Discourse’ Mijde Arslan states that Kırmızıgül’s films aim to depoliticize Kurds by representing them as good ‘citizens’ trapped between two fires. (Arslan 2009). Savata’s films on the other hand are kitch replicas of Turkish melodramas, where the political process is reduced down to individual fatalism.

⁵⁶ The conference was subtitled “Six Films, Six Geographies.” *Min Dît/I Saw* (2009) by Miraz Bezar, *Kilometre Zero / Zero Kilometer* (2005) by Hinar Saleem, *Vinterland/* (2007) by Hisham Zaman,.....

character, Ako, speaks in Kurmanci, a dialect spoken by the Kurdish population inside Turkey, is found an unrealistic portrayal of linguistic situation in Northern Iraq where Sorani is the predominant Kurdish dialect spoken among the Kurdish population.

An important question that the encounter of the audience with the films and their directors brings about is the source of this discrepancy between the former's response to the films being screened throughout the festival and the directors' politico-aesthetic judgments behind the production of these films. The question points to a crucial issue of the make up of the modern Kurdish population. While the majority of the directors are diasporic/exilic living in Europe, the audience of the conference was composed of those who *stayed* in the region. The two live in two different spatio-temporalities. The city of Diyarbakir, the location of reception, is the political and cultural center of the Kurdish politics and has been the most politicized city in Turkish Kurdistan since the 1960s. During the war, the population of the city more than quadrupled due to the systematic destruction of the Kurdish villages as part of the war efforts. Traumas of war coupled with overpopulation, petit crime, a high prostitution level, and the resultant urban degeneration. These spatial registers affected the shape of the political culture within the city. On the other hand, all of the directors attending the conference were either from outside Turkey or left Turkey before the war spread to the urban centers in the region. Miraz Bezar and Yüksel Yavuz left Turkey in the early 1980s and currently live in Germany. Hiner Saleem and Hisam Zaman are from 'Iraqi Kurdistan.' Zaman lives in Norway and Saleem lives in France. None of the directors experienced the ongoing war

between the PKK and Turkish army in the region nor were they part of the political socialization process in Turkish Kurdistan since the 1980s. However, despite the disagreements between the overpoliticized Diyarbakirite audience and the diasporic Kurdish directors, what seemed to unite the two was the conviction that 'Kurdistan' is the main spatiality of Kurdish cinema. The disagreement over the assumed function of cinema within/for the national struggle, whether cinema would be an uninterrupted aid to national struggle or it has a semi-autonomous existence and different dynamics are involved in its production is an important point for the argument of this chapter.

KURDISH CINEMA AND 'KURDISTAN' AS CINEMATIC SPACE

The cinema has become an important cultural medium within Kurdish political struggle.⁵⁷ Yet while an independent 'Kurdistan' has until recently been a primary aim of the Kurdish struggle, Kurdistan as cinematic space is more ambiguous than the political claims on Kurdistan as spatial matrix of political struggle. Even though 'Kurdistan'

⁵⁷ There are several reasons, both internal and external, why cinematic medium has gained a prime importance for the Kurdish struggle. The universal language of cinema, unlike literature which requires more substantial effort to 'translate,' makes it a necessary strategy for a political struggle for whom 'being visible' by the international public has been deemed of crucial importance for recognition. On the other hand, like literature, cinema has become a medium of cultural reproduction, during a time when Kurds' cultural representation is still an issue within the mainstream media of the countries they live in. Another reason is for the Kurdish movements, cultural production has been a part of political struggle especially after the movement became 'urbanized' due to the massive urban migration. In terms of 'cultural policy,' Kurdish Question has been defined, by the national and international policy circles, more and more through the rhetoric of 'cultural rights' as part of the ethics of multiculturalism. Within Turkey's EU membership process, cultural rights (taken as part of human rights) of the national minorities and proposed multicultural policymaking is a major area of contention between Turkey and the union. On the other hand, the multicultural policies have been introduced by the Turkish government with the expectation of de-qualifying the political claims. Lastly, as an art form, cinematic production brings about different modes of political engagement that is complementary to the desire for national recognition. These factors make cinema as an important cultural medium as part of cultural reproduction and of a political strategy within the politics of multiculturalism.

appears as the index of cognitive map within Kurdish films, the films are more concerned with Kurdistan's already fragmented state, and the realistic everyday life of Kurds than reclaiming Kurdistan within cinema through 'revolutionary' heroic figures 'fighting' for the political control of a particular territory that was 'lost' in the past. The opening remarks of Kemal Yıldızhan, the head of the Diyarbakır Cinema Club and the moderator of the first-day panels at the Kurdish Cinema conference explain the aims and motivations of Kurdish cinematic production well:

While being politically fragmented has been a problem for the Kurds, one wonders if this *multicultural* existence as a result of the political fragmentation; Kurds living in the 'four parts' and those living in diaspora, this state of double-spiritedness would allow Kurds to give the world a new cinematic language. In fact, the main premise of the conference is the possibility of a '*new cinematic language*.' [...] This language will be more universal and it will save us from the language of provincial 'broken cinema' that has been imposed upon us. (emphasis added)

The films expose the violent mechanisms securing and reproducing the binary oppositions inside/outside, modern/primitive, developed/underdeveloped, legible/illegible that are productive of nation-space, while denying the same violence –and authority -- to its characters in their encounter with the apparatuses of nation-state. Moreover, the films do not counter unproblematically one nation-space to another, i. e. Turkey versus Kurdistan, rather, they imagine 'Kurdistan' as 'alternative spatiality.' Corresponding to a

territoriality divided by four nation-states, yet inhabited predominantly by Kurdish people, cinematically Kurdistan is offered as the negation of what produces nation-space as geopolitical entity. For the characters in the films Kurdistan means independence and freedom, not necessarily bound with national borders under a nation-state. As will be seen in the discussion, none of the films assign national-borders to 'Kurdistan.'

Borders of Kurdish Cinema

National borders have been a major concern in the representation of 'Doğu' in Turkish cinema. From *Toprağın Kanı/Blood of the Earth* (Atıf Yılmaz 1965) and *Hudutların Kanunu/Law of the Borders* (Lütfi Ömer Akad 1966) in 1960s to *Bedrana* (Süreyya Duru 1974), *Kara Carsaflı Gelin /The Bride in Black Chador* (Süreyya Duru, 1975), *Hazal* (1979) in the 1970s to *Katırcılar/Mule Riders* (Şerif Gören 1987) and *Derman/Remedy* (Şerif Gören and Zeki Ökten 1984) in the 1980s, border smuggling allegorized the anxiety on the nation-space. Kurdish films share with the Turkish cinema having the borders as a main chronotope of representing the region. However, while in Turkish cinema borders constitute narrative and the spatial limit, beyond which lies death, in Kurdish cinema borders cross in the middle.

Klamek Ji Bo Beko, starts with a map of this kind. Before leaving Turkey to evade conscription and attend Kurdish Peshmerga, Beko's brother Cemal, explains how he would reach Badhinan, his destination in 'Iraqi Kurdistan' on a map he quickly draws on the ground. However, instead of drawing a map of 'Kurdistan,' he starts the map with the borderline separating Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran, and then locating Bahdinan in the

‘upper Iraqi Kurdistan’ without specifying any borders other than the existing ones. The important part of this representational strategy, drawing ‘Kurdistan’ through existing national borders yet without assigning a national border of its own, specifying its limits, works to let the director comment upon the violence embodied in the construction and the maintenance of the very national borders. The film takes place towards the end of the Iran-Iraq war and right before the Halabja Massacre in 1988 when Saddam Hussein’s army gassed a Kurdish village causing thousands of Kurds to die. Cemal tells Beko, he may either use Turkey-Iraq border, which is “heavily protected by both Iraqi and Turkish army” or he can reach Bahdinan “through Syrian Border. ” After Cemal leaves, the gendarmerie comes to the village to search for him. The commander collects everybody hands-up in an open area surrounded by tens of armed soldiers pointing the guns towards them. The commander asks for Cemal but nobody answers except for the mukhtar who explains him that people do not understand his language, for nobody speaks in Turkish in the village. Nonetheless, he warns the villagers:

Now, open your ears and listen to me carefully. I see you refuse to help me.

Villages like yours do not have a long life. Mukhtar, why are we giving you money for Village guardianship and the guns? You have to inform us every unusual situation and make sure everybody in the village is loyal to the Turkish state.[....] Even birds should not fly without our knowledge here. In case of the smallest nuisance, your village will sure be destroyed like other villages. We show no mercy to those who supports separatists and the PKK.

Unable to make anybody speak, the soldiers ransack the houses and take Beko as hostage until Cemal surrenders. However, Beko manages to escape the military jeep and goes to the Syrian border. He crosses the border through the river camouflaged under the bushes. He overhears the border soldiers talking about the military operations under the Turkish flag. On the other side of the border a fellow Kurd meets him and takes him to the refugee camp. There Beko introduces himself as coming from ‘Turkish Kurdistan’ and wanting to go Bahdinan to search for his brother. Another fellow Kurd warns him to the ongoing war between Iran and Iraq and the overmilitarized borders. Along with two Peshmerga he eventually crosses the Iraqi border through the mountains and reach another refugee camp in Iraq. While he was staying there until he hears from Cemal, the village gets attacked by an Iraqi helicopter. He survives the attack and saves a little girl, the only survivor in the village. After the attack, he crosses the Turkish border and at the end of the film we see him in Germany, where the films started. He learns that his brother Cemal has been arrested by the Turkish army and shot dead during an armed encounter with the PKK.

While ‘Kurdistan’ informs the characters’ spatial orientation in the region, it does not have a physical marker to identify it except for the borders as its *negation*. Nevertheless, ‘Kurdistan’ survives as part of a rhyme that the kids memorize as part of their education they receive under a makeshift open tent and in front of a small blackboard: “Em Kurdin, Welate me Kurdistanê. Hesp, pirtuk, al, kûsî” / We are Kurd, Kurdistan is our nation. Horse, book, flag, tortoise. The second part of the rhyme sets up

a deterritorialized cartography through identification with ‘nomadic’ animals standing for ‘Kurdistan.’

In Hiner Saleem’s *Dol/Valley* (2007) the main character, Azad (the free one) is also destined to cross the border after his armed encounter with an army officer on his wedding day. Unlike *Beko*, in *Dol* we see the sign of the ‘Kurdistan’ of Kurdistan Autonomous Region (KAR). Azad’s journey into Kurdistan intersects with three other Kurds, one from Iraqi Kurds (Jekaf), one from ‘Kurdistan of Iran’(Taman) and the other one from Diaspora in France (Çeto). On the border of Kurdistan, a civilian border officer greets them and let them in even though neither Azad nor Jekaf carries passports. The narrative brings together all Kurds from different parts in KAR. The autonomous region provides safety to the characters, but they still have to move back and forth across the borders to connect with their beloved ones.

The film opens with Azad’s story on a barren hillside. As the camera pans to the left on the hillside, we see a Turkish flag and an inscription “Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyene” painted on the rocks of the hill. In the next scene, we see a cow looking at the painting sadly, then in the next scene, we see the cow lying dead on the ground. As another mark on the space, this time on the air, the soldiers blow a huge white balloon on which states the same “Ne Mutlu” inscription. Both the ground and the air thus marked by national identity. While the flag is simply an identity marker that works to nationalize a territory, the inscription announces much more. It refers to the state of non-identification and uses a language of ‘curse’ to address those who do ‘not’ belong. Although the intended effect

of the proverb is not the sudden death of the onlooker like the cow, it subjects the onlooker to a precarious life, intensified by the barrack and the flag as the only representations of Turkishness. The matching of the inscription with the barrack works to point to how the former regulates the national life. What is important in the proverb is not that only Turks deserve to be blessed (the literal meaning of the text), but the state of being to which those who are not blessed would be subjected to. The very existence of the barrack works to deal with what lays outside the ‘blessed’ national identity. While it seems to be describing the Turks, the proverb actually regulates who is *not* Turk.⁵⁸

Yet, the victim of the border as violence is not only the Kurd. The security barrack is located across the hillside, where the recently-appointed commander talks to his wife:

[...] Here? Here is like Hell. I feel like I am in the Bermuda Triangle. Here is Turkey, behind the mountain is Iran and on the other side is Iraq. There is not even a bar here. They are all backward people. Half of them are smugglers and the other half separatists. It’s been a week but it feels like a year.

The paranoia-inducing solitude and alienation of the army crew within the ‘hell-like’ nation-space, furthermore, turns into arbitrary violence as time passing activity for the soldiers. A soldier warns the commander about Azad that he should watch out of him.

⁵⁸ We see the proverb, the military presence, and space as directly related in *Fotograf* (2001) by the director Kazım Öz. The film is about two guys riding bus together to the East. One of them goes to a military headquarter to surrender to do his military service and the other one to join the PKK. As the bus enters the region, we start seeing the hills with the same inscription. The inscription signifies the absence and presence of Turkishness at the same time. The curse, sanctioned by the army, regulates the national identity within the region.

“Sir, he [Azad] thinks himself Don Quixote, Al Capone, even Che Guevera. He is a smuggler, has connection with the separatists. You will hear his name a lot in here.” Soon after Azad and two other villagers are taken into the barrack and beaten up despite the will of another army officer who disagrees with violence as an effective strategy to deal with the ‘problem.’ Azad’s wedding ceremony, on the other hand, contrasts with the fear-inducing claustrophobic military barrack. The ceremony takes place outside on the hills. The singer, played by the famous singer Ciwan Haco, sings his ‘Diyarbakir’ song. The colorful dresses of the people – in contrast with the unicolor military suit--- and the joyful music turns the barren land into a living place. However, the arrival of the commander who gets annoyed by the Kurdish music turns the wedding into chaos after which Azad shoots the commander and leaves the village.

Jekaf and Taman’s stories add a gender dimension to narrative through a similar stories of displacement. When she was 15, the Iraqi army bombarded Jekaf’s. She had to go to Baghdad where she started to sing in Arabic in a cabaret until her Kurdish accent became an issue. Then she had to come to ‘Kurdistan.’ Taman was a Radio DJ in Iran until the radio station got bombarded by the Iranian Army. Kurds from Iraq brought her to a hospital in KAR. Similar to Azad, she had to part with her fiancée who still stays in a camp in Iran. At the end of the film Taman and her fiancé are seen during their wedding ceremonies but the festivities get interrupted by the falling bombs on the camp. Azad goes back to his village to get his fiancée but both he and his fiancée get shot by the commander.

Dividing the narrative space, the borders have an atypical characteristic in these films. The borders that are crossed do not necessarily overlap with the geopolitical borders. Moreover the cross border mobility works to problematize inside and outside of the border crossed and what constitutes transnationality, defined within the literature as border-evading mobilities of bodies and signals. Certain cross-border mobilities in the films, such as character Ömer in *Yol*, stay within the same geo-political unit yet he experience the mobility as trans-national. In other films, like *Klamek Ji Bo Beko*, although Beko crosses more than one geo-political border, he does not experience cross-nationality through the Kurdish families he meets beyond the borders. The same holds for the characters of Bahman Ghobadi's films. In *Zamani Barayé Masti Asbha*, the border separates relatives, not nations. Hence, the borders of Kurdish cinema function according to the political cognition of the characters not the international state-system. In this way a cross-border mobility can be both *transnational* and *intra-national* depending on from what/whose perspective the mobility is narrated. The trajectory of the characters draws a new map across national borders which embody the violent cartographies of the nation-states.

Claiming the space-time of the city: Min Dît and Press

Both *Min Dît* and *Press* take the city of Diyarbakır as space of their narrative. The city has been the center of Kurdish politics in Turkey since the 1960s and the site of hegemonic contestation between pro-Kurdish parties and the Turkish governments. However, the importance of the city goes back to the 1920s when the city became a nerve

center of the Sheikh Said rebellion of 1925 and the alleged home to the Sheikh Said's grave after he and his comrades were executed in the downtown Dağkapı area of the city. In the 1960s, the Worker's Party of Turkey gained one MP seat from the city. In the 1970s, pro-Kurdish Mehdi Zana, a tailor by profession, was elected the mayor of the city. In 1990s, the city turned into a site of urban warfare. In 2008, before the local elections, the Turkish Prime minister, in his address to the public in Diyarbakır, referring to the city, stated that they would "conquer the stronghold" of the pro-Kurdish DTP only to be reciprocated by the Mayor of the city claiming to "hold on to" the city.

In both *Press* and *Min Dît*, the stories unfold within an urban space contained by tanks (panzer), police cars and secret service vehicles (white Renault automobiles as quintessential indexical sign of urban containment). *Press* tells the story of the pro-Kurdish daily *Özgür Gündem* (Independent Agenda) in mid-1990s. Like other Kurdish cities in the region, the city was under the State of Emergency Rule (OHAL).⁵⁹ In the Diyarbakır office of *Özgür Gündem*, four reporters and one editor work. They have to send the news and visuals to the Istanbul office for publication and distribution. However, the office is under 24-hour surveillance. Early in the film we see one of the reporters on the street forced into a police vehicle blind-folded and taken to outside the city and threatened by the JITEM officer to quit his job. Not only are the life of the reporters under threat, their mobility in the city is constricted too. They cannot print the

⁵⁹ In order to create the chronotope, the director uses CGI of tanks and the other vehicles. When the characters are seen outside, tanks usually obstruct their view and the sound of the military planes marks the soundscape of the film.

pictures for the news because the printhouses are also threatened by the security forces. They cannot mail the materials to the Istanbul office because the Post Office opens every piece of mail before sending it to its destination. The army also controls the incoming mails and the newspapers. When the office receives the newspapers, distribution is made clandestinely through informal channels by Fırat, the office boy, or given to corner stores as long as they manage to stay open.

The response by the crew of *Özgür Gündem* to the highly militarized urban space and violence is different in kind. To begin with, the protagonists' affective attachment to the city is different. The film opens in one of the room inside the office where the reporters work. An audiocassette player hooked to an analogue desktop clock is the first thing seen in the film. The clock at a certain time activates an electric circuit that turns on the audiocassette player. The machine plays the song 'Diyarbakir' from a pirated copy of an audiocassette of the famous Kurdish singer Ciwan Haco. The lyrics of the song starts with the following line: "Min navê xwe kola li burcên Diyarbakir"/I inscribed my name on the towers of Diyarbakir. The desire to appropriate the city is made obvious from the first scene of the film. The sound of the music would contrast with the deadly soundscape created by the military vehicles throughout the film. When the editor pointed out the censorship at the post office, the Fırat suggests they use intercity buses, which are much harder to control. Also, when the crew learns that the military is not letting the newspapers in the region, it decides to 'depend on the people' to transport and distribute the newspapers. The children 'appointed' by Fırat start clandestinely distributing the

newspapers to the readers. They finally have to turn one of the rooms in the office into darkroom for printing the photos when the printing shop stopped printing their pictures.

These tactics used by the reporters of Özgür Gündem resembles what James Scott calls “weapons of the weak:” unorganized (in the sense of the not being “revolutionary” practice), based on the informal networks and avoiding direct or symbolic confrontation with authority (Scott, xvi). What these tactics by the crew in response to the spatial entrapment by the state of emergency rules tries to achieve is to create lines of escapes that the military power cannot control. The ‘informal networks,’ ‘depending on the people’ are the important components of that tactic. However, these tactics originate not only as the only way to survive the military presence, although it is an important component: Faysal, one of the reporters, who carries a gun for self-defense, is highly criticized by the others. Yet the same day he leaves his gun in the office, he gets shot by a secret service agent. The film denies military means to its characters for a particular reason. The crew counters not only ‘the power,’ but also the *means* of power through which the urban space is subjugated. As stated by the editor, it is only the negation of violence as method, life can be justified as productive, even though eventually it causes the death of the individuals. In the end, the film makes its statement clear. Alişan, another reporter taking up Faysal’s unfinished story about the existence of a secret paramilitary force founded by the state, goes to interview an influential political figure in the city of Hakkari. This time he carries a gun for protection. In a conversation with one of the men of the political figure, who called Alişan after the political figure gets shot following the

initial interview the man asks him to take his ‘handsome’ picture ‘like in the films’ while he points his gun towards the lens of Alişan’s camera. Alişan carries the camera in one hand and the gun in his other hand inside his pocket. Although Alişan realizes that it is a set up and he will be shot, he decides to press the shutter, instead of the trigger.

The protagonist of *Min Dît* follows a similar ‘non-violent’ path as Alişan. The film begins in 1990s yet covers approximately a decade in the city. The film is about two siblings, Gulistan and Firat, and the dramatic turn in their lives after their parents, -- journalists for a pro-Kurdish journal -- are assassinated by a JITEM officer.⁶⁰ The 1990s, or ‘Doksanlar,’ (nineties) as it is referred to within the temporality of Kurdish struggle, witnessed the increased violence within the city as a response to the rising popularity and hegemony of PKK vis-à-vis the state. After the parents’ assassination, Firat and Gulistan are left without any means to make their living. After their neighbor, their only social and economic support is forced to leave the city, the siblings start selling their household goods, and when everything is gone their landlord kicked them out. To survive in the city, they start selling napkins and lighters on the streets. Soon, Firat begins to pickpocket as part of an adolescent gang, while Gulistan accompanies a woman, Dilan, who,

⁶⁰ In the Kurdish cinema conference, the film is dismissed by the audience as unrealistic. I argue that while historical references are abundant, the film does not aim at realism as much as it offers a new reality through a temporal montage. Past and the present intermingles in an assemblage of forms of violence productive of the urban experience during the war. The history of urban violence becomes life story of the main characters. The film shows the children as the bearer of urban experience in Diyarbakir. The parents are assassinated in 1990s, the city the kids are strolling in is the product of post-war urban reconstruction in the early 2000s: the city walls and the new downtown area are rehabilitated. The film re-registers the 1990s’ JITEM, prostitution, child labor, robbery to the space-time of new urban reality.

unknown to Gulistan, is a prostitute. Dilan uses Gulistan as a cover to not to attract attention single women on the street. Gulistan provides Dilan with mobility and invisibility in the militarized and masculine public space.

The only thing Gulistan managed to keep from her parents is an audiocassette that her mother recorded of her own voice reading the story of a wolf in a village. The story works as the central narrative – and the message-- of the film. The story is about a wolf that repeatedly comes to a village and each time captures a lamb from the village flock. Although the villagers are tired and frustrated by the wolf, they are unable to do anything. But one day, the elder of the village approaches to the wolf from behind and puts a ring on its neck. Surprised, the villagers ask why he did not kill the wolf instead, and the elder responds that in this way the wolf no longer will be able to hurt any living being for whenever it attempts to approach its ring will announce its coming so that the preys would run away on time. The plan works and every time the wolf approaches the flock the shepherd hears the ring and protects the animals. In the end the wolf dies of hunger. The director uses the story to give the resolution to the narrative of the film: The violent ‘wolf,’ threatening a social space and exposing the violence, instead of reproducing it to deal with the wolf. While the narrative may seem simple, it creates a phantasmatic structure for the otherwise realist representation of the film as it comes back at the end of the film.

The way the urban space is represented in *Min Dît*, through the axes of identity and violence is brilliant. The films clearly differentiates the public and private use of

Kurdish language. Kurdish language is used in interpersonal communications among the characters. Throughout the film Gulistan speaks in Turkish only a few times: when negotiating prices for the household goods with a client who tries to fool her, when she sells napkins to people on the street. Firat also uses Turkish a few times; first time to the pharmacist who refuses to give him medicine for his sibling and when he rides the vendor and use the megaphone to advertise the stuff he is selling. In Dilan's case the separation is clearer. Dilan is a Kurdish name, she does not use her real name when she works: Dilan becomes Turkish Dilara. She only speaks Turkish with her customers, who are mostly security officers. On the one hand, spatializing the use of Kurdish, namely, limiting its use to interpersonal communications while addressing the 'public' in Turkish, works to problematize the public space that is controlled by the state apparatuses; on the other hand, limiting Turkish language to the moments of frustration and humiliation registers the affective – political dimension of the language. The spatial and affective-political coordinates of the language successfully work to define the Turkish language as a form of both spatial and political violence. Another spatial reference is though a song Gulistan, Firat and the other street kids sing one night around the fire. Like Ciwan Haco's 'Diyarbakir' in *Press*, the song 'Ka welatê min Kurdistan?' (Where is my country, Kurdistan?) works as means to appropriate the space. However, the song is interrupted by the police vehicle, which not seeing the kids, dumps a dead body into a pit near where the kids sit.

The tension escalates when, at the end of the film, Gulistan sees the JITEM officer, who killed her parents, talking to Dilan for a possible date. The officer takes them to his house. While the officer and Dilara are in the other room, Gulistan manages to steal the officer's pistol and one of his pictures. However, instead of killing him, she rushes out to find Fırat. Along with Fırat and other street kids Dilan puts into effect the 'fantasmatic' solution to deal with the officer. She prepares flyers with the picture of the officer with a note explaining the real identity of the officer who is known publicly as decent public officer. She distributes the flyers within the officer's neighborhood, while Fırat, climbed to the mosque's minaret and screams through a megaphone to warn people to the real job of the officer "He is not who you think he is. He is a killer."

Village as Nation-space: *İki Dil Bir Bavul* and *Ax*

Turkish cinema has had an ambivalent attachment to the village. Finding there the authentic roots of the national identity and the pedagogical desire to modernize and include it into the modern national identity always went in hand in the representations of Anatolian villages. Yet the identity of the village is left unquestioned, while the cinematic critique is formed along the lines of the problematic of modernity taken as a temporal process. In the first chapter, I argued that the spatial expansion of the representation in the Turkish cinema towards the Anatolian village in the 1950s is informed by the desire to find/found a secular national culture, hence the cinematic representation of the villages should be read as part of the production of nation-space. While the pedagogical desire is still alive, the claim for 'authenticity' is replaced by a more direct assimilationist function

of the education in the Kurdish region. In addition to the national-pedagogical desire, since 1980s, the villages have assumed another importance for the nation-state. In the fight with the PKK, the Kurdish villages have been deemed crucial sites by the state as they provide the militias and the accommodation for the PKK. The village guard system⁶¹ introduced in the mid-1980s was one of the official responses to the double function of the Kurdish villages, the other being depopulating the villages in the region. Both *İki Dil Bir Bavul* and *Ax* take place in the village and problematize both education and evacuation as twin-processes of the production of nation-space.

Ax takes place in a Kurdish village that is evacuated by the Turkish gendarmerie. Zelo, the main character, his wife and his dog are the only ones staying in the village after the evacuation. Yet Zelo's wife dies soon after and the soldiers kill his dog. The film opens from within the grave Zelo digs for his wife. On his way back from the graveyard he sees the village guards who ask him if he has anybody to bury him when he dies. Back in the village, we see boot prints of the soldiers on the ground and the boot of soldiers soon after comes into the frame still searching for Zelo in his house. Although they don't find anybody, they set the house on fire. Throughout the film we see the soldiers only through their boots. Neither the soldiers are given proper body to inhabit the space, as everything but the boots are kept outside the frame, nor is their presence amount to more

⁶¹ Village guards are appointed by the state among the local population who are not sympathetic to PKK. They are militia units to keep the PKK away from the region. As they are not accountable for their actions within their jurisdictions, they have become very powerful. They are a main agents responsible for human rights violations in the Kurdish region. Their number reached 65.000 by the end of the 1990s. (Bruinessen 2007)

than boot prints and the smoke that the burnt house produces. On the contrary, the films re-registers the village to the owners through Zelo's memories seen in flashbacks. During his walk among the still smoking houses he hears the sound of drums. Men gathered and having conversation, kids are playing with the animals, a woman on the mule is approaching his way. People are speaking in Kurdish. However, everything disappears suddenly. In another remembering sequence the camera from Zelo's point of view enters a room full of men playing music. Zelo salutes everybody and they welcome him in Kurdish. Yet they also suddenly disappear and only the broken instruments on the floor stays in the frame. In the last flashback sequence, Zelo remembers the day the villagers leave the village: they carry their houses on top of the mules, their animals follow them. Zelo's grandson begs him to go with them otherwise they would kill him too. Zelo's village is not totally destroyed though. The village school is the only building that is left untouched by the army and it's still erect structure contrasts with the perished village. In a sequence we see Zelo walking inside the school garden. He comes face to face with the bust of Mustafa Kemal also seen in the frame is the Turkish flag on the background as the only discernible marks of 'identity' in the village. That there is nobody to 'benefit' from the school, yet still keeping it within the village-no-more, works to problematize the school with the bust and the flag as nationalizing 'spatial marks' on an otherwise generic post-apocalyptic village.

The village school also works as the main setting in *İki Dil Bir Bavul/ On the Way to School*. The film documents the first year of a young Turkish teacher, Emre, in a

primary school in an eastern Kurdish village as his first place of enrolment. As a national/modern fantasy, an idealist ‘Western’ teacher, going to the rural Anatolia to enlighten the people there is a common genre in the Turkish literature since 1930s; from Yakup Kadri’s ‘Yaban’ (Savage) to the 1940s and 50s ‘village realism’ to the post-1960 social realist films on the eastern Turkey such as *Toprağın Kanı/Blood of the Soil* (Atıf Yılmaz 1965) and *Hudutların Kanunu/Law of the Borders* (L. Ö. Akad 1966). On the Way to School has Emre at the center of its narrative. He is from a western city, Denizli and although caught surprised that he is assigned to a remote village that he cannot even find on the map (Çiçek 2011), he tries to keep intact the Republican mission of educating the people.

Directors Doğan and Eskikoy follow the teacher from the day he comes to the village and throughout the film they document his interaction with the students and the parents. The village is out of running water and electricity is cut regularly where it exists at all and the school has only one classroom. When the Imam and the head of the village visit him at the school building, Emre shares with them his disappointment on seeing the state of the village after coming from a ‘city’ where there are tall buildings and whatever one imagines is abundant. With the help of the village head Emre manages to find the kids who are supposed to be students. His initial difficulty in finding his way in the village is, people do not speak in Turkish among themselves. In the case of the prospective students, the problem is even more tragic: the kids do not even have the basic knowledge of Turkish to understand him, nor does he know Kurdish to communicate

with the students. The situation get worse when on the first day of the classes, the Emre announces his first rule: “No Kurdish in the classroom!” and he continues: “Why? Because our lectures are in Turkish. Now if you speak in Kurdish, I won’t understand what you say. Throughout the eight year primary education, everything is in Turkish.” Alas, the students do not understand what he says. Although later on he manages the students to comply with the rule, it leads to monologs and repetitious sessions. Most of the students don’t speak, don’t understand and they occasionally ‘repeat after’ the teacher. The films juxtapose the state of the village, his position in the village and his desire to teach Turkish when nothing is Turkish in the village. His precarious life in the village contrasts with his authority in the classroom. Yet his authority fails, as it is not communicated.

The directors brilliantly relate the pedagogical process to the spatial production by way of a series of juxtapositions. Within the village, the language of communication is Kurdish. Outside the school is the only place communication continues. The classroom with the mini Turkish flags, the blackboard, the posters to teach Turkish is overwhelming. Due to the lack of classrooms all available students are dumped into the same classroom. Add to this is the fact that it is a silent space for the kids. The teacher punishes the students who speak in Kurdish. When they speak in Kurdish, they stand on one foot in front of the blackboard. It is a total space of domination, if one does not count the lack of communication. Within the school garden, we see the same bust of Mustafa Kemal and the Turkish flag we saw in Ax. Every morning in front of the school building,

the students recite “The Oath.” It starts with “I am Turk. I am right. I am diligent” and ends with “May my existence be gift to the existence of the Turks. Blessed is the one how calls oneself a Turk.” On Children’s Day, the students plant trees and play competitive games unlike their usual collective games. On that day, the teacher wants to communicate the importance of the day to the students. He himself answers the questions he asks students after a short silent pause not filled by the students:

[A]pril 23rd. What happened on that day? The Parliament is founded! Which nation is celebrating this holiday? Turkish nation! Where are we living? ...In Turkey! Appreciate that!

While the violence ingrained in the pedagogical process is seen throughout the film, the directors do not attempt to personalize the violence. Emre is seen as a committed, idealist teacher who wants to make change in the village, which he believes would be done through education. The *verité* style allows the directors show his precarious state in the village. As he is unable to communicate with his students and the parents, he becomes more alienated. The teacher’s relationship with the villagers and the students is mediated by the state. Emre tries to embody the state discourse yet his ‘unmediated’ physical interaction haunts his pedagogical duty. In the school garden, we see him asking a student why he is not playing with his classmates. As he does not get any response, he continues: “You have no idea what I am talking about, right? I don’t understand you, either. What are we going to do?”

Ironically, the villagers know the absurdity and impossibility of the task yet they respect and try to help the teacher. For them, though, the purpose of the education is bit different. A mother supports the education claiming that a ‘foreign language’ may benefit the kids in the long run. The most absurd part is when Emre has the parents come to meeting to discuss the situation of the students. He complains to the parents that, “They [the students] don’t know Turkish”. And he continues: “That’s OK. But if you stimulate them to speak in Turkish, that would be great. They don’t understand my language.” Ironically, after Emre finishes his sentence, a father asks him to wait so that he can translate what he just said into Kurdish for the mothers.

While the teacher ‘marks’ the space as Turkish through pedagogical techniques, he is not able to reproduce national identity due to his lack of understanding – both linguistically and historically—and inability to penetrate the everyday life of the inhabitants. At the end of the second semester, the kids are given their school report. Emre’s relatives pick him up from the school and the summer time starts for the kids. At the very end we see the kids swimming in a small pond, talking and screaming, unlike in the classroom.

CONCLUSION

The ‘creative’ tension between the struggle for territorial rights and the deterritorialized state of the Kurdish population, as wishfully stated by Yıldızhan, and reflected in the cinematic productions puts Kurdish cinema in a constructive tension with the current taxonomies in cinema studies. While ‘national’ struggle and its influence on

some of the Kurdish directors may put Kurdish cinema in the field of ‘national cinema,’ now debated categorization in the discipline due to the decoupling effects of ‘global capitalism’ (Sarkar 2006) and the transnational flows making obsolete the national borders as containers of territorial identities (Hjort and McKenzie 2000; Willemsen and Vitali 2006; Iordanova, Martin-Jones and Vidal 2010), Kurdish cinema’s deconstructive engagement in the idea and the function of nation-state and national identity, and its ‘fragmented’ transnationality, puts it apart from other ‘national’ cinemas. However, as discussed earlier, its transnationality, the exilic/diasporic state of its directors and the characters, do not prevent a different cartography that these trajectories draw: the transnationality and the intranationality of the characters’ trajectories would be decided according to from whose perspective the mobility is perceived. For a ‘transnational cinema’ perspective, which takes transnational mobilities as evading ‘national’ borders, the transnational mobility of the characters who do not cross national borders, like Ömer in *Yol*, and the intranational mobilities across national borders, like of Beko and Azad, would be an anomaly. The characters’ uneasy relationship with the national borders – their physical-legal existence yet cognitive infunctionality-- may help thinking on nations and borders beyond how they are classified within geopolitical thinking.

In terms of funding sources and circulation venues films are transnational. The directors not only struggle to secure funding from the governments of their host countries, they struggle to reach to their audiences, which makes international films festivals as main venue for their screenings. While they are experiencing the difficulties

of having no state-institutional base for international representation ---the films are invited to major international film festivals as part of the quota of their countries of citizenship, with which the directors have at best ambiguous relationship---it also provides them the freedom from a nationalizing state censorship. On the other hand, the spatial analysis of Kurdish cinema, while recognizing the fragmentedness, avoids reifying the transnationality and mobility. The mobilities of the directors and the protagonists unquestionably shape the cinematic production, yet what defines Kurdish cinema is its attachment to the spatiality, no matter how deterritorialized it has been and imagined. Transnationality is important as long as it shapes how the spatiality, Kurdistan, is imagined.

Rather than mourning for the lack of a nation-state, the directors creatively deal with the causes and the effects of living without having a state of their own. The films create a non-violent cartography where even an ‘anti-colonial’ violence is not permitted. Gulistan, Zelo, Azad, Alişan are the figures that a ‘revolutionary’ political aesthetics would not accommodate. They not only avoid the contact with the apparatuses of state, when they come into contact, they refuse to retaliate in equal style. Unquestionably, the political and cultural struggle influenced/ inspired this cinematic production, yet its non-violent aesthetic and its language is to an important extent determined by the deterritorialized states of the directors, who are able to turn the ‘lack’ into a new language of cinema and a non-state cartography. Namely, in the Kurdish context, the function of

the cinematic production is not to imagine a state for the space, but find a space where the state cannot find a way to. This is the premise, and the possibility of, a Kurdish cinema.

CHAPTER VI - CONCLUSION

As the Kurdish question that evolved into an existential ‘national’ problem of both the Turkish state and the intelligentsia for more than a century, manifesting itself in different guises such as the problem of modernization, development, political violence, human rights, multiculturalism etc., the cinematic representation about Kurds has been a central topic within the cinematic in Turkey. The term ‘Kurdish question,’ unlike the rival ‘Eastern Problem,’ in itself does refer to the spatial claims that inform the Kurdish struggle, although the spatial claims indeed have been revised and negotiated throughout the history of the armed conflict, from an ‘independent Kurdistan’ up until the end of 1990s and later on ‘democratic autonomy’ within a confederate system. Following this central spatial problematic, I argued that the analysis of the cinematic production regarding Kurds should start from the recognition of the centrality of ‘space’ within the Kurdish question. Following this argument, I proposed that any scholarly analysis in general of the cinematic representation of people inhabiting contested territories should put their space at the center of critical reflection for the very spatial claims over that particular spatiality forms the limits of cultural as well as political representation.

Throughout the previous chapters, where I discussed four periods during which the cinematic representation is formed by a specific problematization, I claimed that while Kurdish question informed the cinematic representation, the politics of representation has been determined by the politics of space, namely the way the East had been appropriated by the political power and the filmmakers. Although Doğu as a

discursive space formed first and foremost within the state's address of the East and worked to assimilate the region into the space of the nation, cinematic representation should be taken as a turning point in the representation of Doğu. Formed at the conjuncture of post-1960 politico-cultural regulations and reforms and followed the first critical academic studies on the region, cinematic Doğu both acknowledged, as the limit of representation, and subverted the contours of the discourse of Doğu. Yet, as I tried to show in the individual chapters, the national 'spatial anxiety' determined the politics of representation: the ghostly mobile bodies of the smugglers, the pre-modern the feudal lords, and the armed bandits haunted the cinematic space of Doğu.

In every period one character becomes dominant in the films I discussed, yet I tried to show that the existence and the narrative function of these characters are due to the changing perception of the space these characters inhabit: the narrative structure of the film adaptations of Yaşar Kemal's stories in the late 1950s, where an orphan villager trespasses the feudal hierarchy, by claiming the hand of the daughter of the feudal nobility, and outmaneuvering the feudal authority by fulfilling its one 'impossible' wish, juxtaposes the embryo of modern national subject with the 'pre-modern' feudal system still intact in rural Anatolia. The 'smuggler' in social realism of the 1960s reflects the border anxiety caused by the revival of the Kurdish movement both inside and outside the national borders. Maraba took the central space in cinematic representation in the 1970s as part of Socialist movement's investment in the region and due to the short alliance between Turkish and Kurdish socialism. 'Maraba,' the revolutionary agency of socio-

economic development, was the product of the socialist gaze that prioritized socialist revolution to realize national modernization. The representation of the ‘bandit’ of the 1980s through the mid 1990s was mediated by the armed conflict. The free-floating and border-evading mobility of the bandit was the sign of spatial anxiety caused by the armed conflict. The contemporary migrant character is obviously the product of the war that caused the massive depopulation of the region scattering around millions of people around the western metropolises. It is only within the narrative economy of Kurdish films that Kurdish characters emerge as proper subjects. It is also within these films that the audience is reminded that the space that the characters inhabit is not Doğu, but *Bakur* (North).

Neither the few foundational novels of the early republican period where the eastern characters were portrayed in a derogatory way in stories of the victory of military might and the modern mind over the illiterate and ‘savage’ ‘mountain people,’ nor the fatalistic films portraying the deadly helplessness of the eastern people were nearly as popular as the films influenced by the revolutionary tradition. Yet the critical tradition in cinematic production informed by the socialist theory and anti-colonial politics, while not in the same way as the official discourse, took modern-feudal axis as the main structuring template for cinematic representation of Doğu. This perception determined class antagonism as the politico-ethical commitment behind cinematic production. The tension, thus emerged between the class antagonism and national liberation as possible trajectories of cultural politics, was the local reflection in Turkey of what, until 1990s,

occupied western Marxism as ‘national question’ (Ahmad 1992, Blaut 1987, Löwy 1998). The disconnect between the conception of Doğu through the terms of class antagonism and national modernization thus prioritizing the independence of Turkey vis-à-vis imperialism and identifying Turkish state as oppressive vis-à-vis the Kurds deeply inflected the politics of cinematic representation on Doğu. Although the Doğu as cinematic space and the Doğu of the state discourse differed on several grounds, the latter working against the basic contours of the former, the East stayed as Doğu in Turkish cinema.

There are many questions and concerns raised in this project that need further discussion. I could only briefly mention the foundational role Yılmaz Güney played in both the formation of socialist cinema in Turkey and the Kurdish cinema. An academic work on the cinema of Yılmaz Güney has yet to exist. Another important concern is the issue of the censorship and cinema. The existence of censorship is like a ghost haunting every single film. The analysis of censorship, another scholarly untouched subject in Turkish cinema, deserves serious study. My last chapter on Kurdish cinema was a later addition to this project’s formulation, yet the increasing number of Kurdish films and films festivals and conferences necessitated a reflection on this emerging cinema. The analysis of Kurdish cinema also showed me the validity of my methodology of ‘spatial reading’ of Turkish Cinema and the representation of Kurds therein. As I reflected on the individual films, I noticed the epistemic shift in the conception of the cinematic space of Kurdish films. The disappearance of ‘Doğu’ and the emergence of Kurdistan as cinematic

space in Kurdish cinema helped me better understand the subtleties of Doğu as location on the one hand and as discursive-cinematic space on the other. The changing ‘spatial’ parameters of Kurdish politics and their effects on Kurdish cinema is another issue I would like to address, but this one requires a longitudinal commitment. The question of how the Kurdish filmmakers will negotiate the aesthetic and political gap created by their transnational (diasporic) existence with an audience who, against all odds, still live closer to ‘home,’ and are still part of the Kurdish struggle, is also an important concern to address.

Finally, my project is an initial attempt to start a conversation with the literature on national/transnational cinema debate. Discussing the production of national cinema in relation to spatial shifts within and without the field of cinematic production aims to contribute to the larger (trans)national cinema debate. Recently, the focus in cinema studies has shifted to ‘transnational mobilities’ that are claimed to make discussion of ‘the national,’ as the scope of cinematic analysis, irrelevant. Taking the cinematic production as productive of space (part of the production of nation-space), rather than being bounded by ‘national territory’ would be the methodological contribution of this dissertation. This methodology problematizes the dichotomy of national vs. transnational (i.e. stasis vs mobility) by taking both of them as *spatialities*. My study discusses how national cinema and nation-space are intimately connected. Transnational cinema, exilic cinema, diasporic cinema, while shifted the focus away from national cinema, by emphasizing ‘mobilities’ nation-space framed by national borders has not lost its valence

as, in the films of transnational mobilities, traumatic lines of separation. We see in the films of the transnational (diasporic/exilic) directors, the borders are not as outmoded 'criscrossed' constructs that belong to the past but they still define the lives of many in the 'post-national moment.' The chapter on Kurdish cinema aims to look at the symbiosis between nationality and transnationality, outside of dichotomous logic.

Towards the end of the writing process, I was asked to help start a Cinema-Television department in a new public university in the city of Mardin located in 'the East.' I take this as an opportunity to be a part of a process in which I have been only academically involved. The prospect of being able to educate the next generation of filmmakers and scholars who can be more spatially perceptive towards 'the region' is a wonderful reward for me as a scholar. The tension between Doğu (the east) and Bakur (north) is still expanding. Whatever comes out of it, I will be part of the process.

APPENDIX A: THE LIST OF THE FILMS IN THE EAST

1950s

Mezarımı Taştan Oyun/Dig My Grave in Stone (Atıf Yılmaz 1951)

Ezo Gelin/Ezo: the Bride (Orhan Elmas 1955)

Dağları Bekleyen Kız/The Girl Who Waits For the Mountains (Atıf Yılmaz 1955)

Dertli Gelin Şirvan/Sirvan: The Rueful Bride (Muharrem Gurses 1955)

Eceline Susamışlar/Those who Tempt Fate (Çetin Karamanbey 1959)

Kaderim Böyle İmiş/I Was Born Ill Fated (Nejat Saydam 1959)

1960s

Mor Sevda/Purple Love (Huseyin Peyda 1961)

Erkek Ali/Ali, the Man (Atıf Yılmaz 1964)

Kara Yılan/Black Snake (Ümit Utku 1963)

Hudutların Kanunu / The Law of the Borders (Lütfi Ömer Akad 1966)

Ölüm Tarlası/ The Field of Death (Atıf Yılmaz 1966)

Toprağın Kanı/The Blood of the Soil (Atıf Yılmaz 1965)

Can Pazarı/The Market of Dead (Ertem Göreç 1968)

Seyyit Han (Yılmaz Güney 1968)

Ezo Gelin/Ezo: The Bride (Orhan Elmas 1968)

Aç Kurtlar/Hungry Wolves (Yılmaz Güney 1969)

1970s

Eşkîya Oğlu/The Son of the Bandit (Mumtaz Alpaslan 1970)

Acı/Pain (Yılmaz Güney 1971)

Cemo (Atıf Yılmaz 1972)

Dönüş / The Return (Türkan Şoray 1972)

Ağrı Dağının Gazabı/The Wrath of Mount Ararat (Zeki Ökten 1973)

Ezo Gelin/Ezo: The Bride (Feyzi Tuna 1973)

Hudutların Kartalı/The Eagle of the Borders (Nuri Ergun 1973)

Kızgın Toprak/Heated Earth (Feyzi Tuna 1973)

Sultan Gelin / Halit Refiğ / 1973 [The Bride, Sultan]

Şirvan ile Nazlı/Şirvan and Nazlı (Yavuz Figenli 1973)
Bedrana (Sureyya Duru 1974)
Ölüm Tarlası/The Field of Death (Yücel Uçanoğlu 1974)
Salako/The Fool One (Atıf Yılmaz 1974)
Kuma/Concubine (Atıf Yılmaz 1974)
Kara Çarşafli Gelin/The Bride in Chador (Süreyya Duru / 1975)
Köprü/The Bridge (Şerif Gören 1975)
Fıratın Cinleri/The Jinns of Euphrates (Korhan Yurtsever 1977)
Onu Kötü Vurdular / They Shot Him Dead (Hüseyin Peyda 1977)
Derviş Bey (Şerif Gören 1978)
Kibar Feyzo/Feyzo: the Civilized One (Atıf Yılmaz 1978)
Sürü/The Herd (Zeki Ökten 1978)
Adak/Obilation (Atıf Yılmaz 1979)
Hazal (Ali Ozgenturk 1979)
İsyân/Distress (Orhan Aksoy 1979)
Nazey (Osman F. Seden 1979)
1980s
Havar/Cry (Hüseyin Peyda 1980)
Yılanı Öldürseler/When They Kill the Snakes (Turkan Şoray 1981)
Yol/The Road (Şerif Gören 1982)
Hakkaride Bir Mevsim/A Season in Hakkari (Erden Kıral 1982)
Derman/Remedy (Şerif Gören 1983)
Ayna/The Mirror (Erden Kral 1984)
Kan/Blood (Şerif Gören 1985)
Kurşun Ata Ata Biter/The Sea of Bullet (Ümit Elçi 1985)
Züğürt Ağa/Penniless Agha (Nesli Çölgeçen 1985)
Dilan (Erden Kıral 1986)
Paşo (Samim Meriç 1986)
Mayın/Land Mine (Fikret Uçak 1987)
Katırcılar/ The Mule Riders (Şerif Gören 1987)

Gömlek/Shirt (Bilge Olgaç 1988)

1990s

Berdel (Atıf Yılmaz 1990)

Ah Gardaşım / Oh My Friend (Kadir İnanır 1991)

Mem ile Zin/Mem and Zin (Ümit Elçi 1991)

Siyabend ile Heco / Siyabend and Xece (Şahin Gök 1991)

Kurşun Adres Sormaz/Bullet Asks No Address (Bilge Olgaç 1992)

Drejan (Şahin Gök 1996)

Propaganda (Sinan Çetin 1999)

Sınır/Border (Gürsel Ateş and Gani Rüzgar Şavata 1999)

2000s

Maruf (Serdar Akar 2001)

Vizontele (Yılmaz Erdoğan and Omer Faruk Sorak 2001)

Vizontele: Tuuba (Yılmaz Erdoğan 2004)

Yazı-Tura/Toss-Up (Uğur Yücel 2004)

Büyü/Spell (Orhan Oğuz 2004)

Beyaz Melek/White Angel (Mahsun Kırmızıgül 2007)

Güneşi Gördüm/I Saw the Sun(Mahsun Kırmızıgül 2009)

Nefes: Vatan Sağolsun / The Breath: Long Live the Nation (Levent Semerci 2009)

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